

Second Edition

SALVATION IN THE NAME OF YHWH

Calling on the Name of the Lord

Joel 2:32

Acts 2:21

Romans 10:13

Rosablanca Suen

“I thoroughly recommend *Salvation in the Name of YHWH* to every thirsty soul who wants a more dynamic walk with the Living God of the Bible.”

— Greg Deuble, Pastor and author of *They Never Told Me This in Church!*

“I would like to heartily endorse this wonderful, enlightening work of Biblical scholarship about a topic so relevant to monotheistic studies regarding the identity and faithful activity of YHWH, the one true God, and his unique Son, the lord Jesus the Messiah.” — Kenneth LaPrade, Pastor and author

“Rosablanca Suen in her book gives a very clear warning that the day of YHWH is very close. As I read the pages I can feel the Spirit of God speaking to me through the words that she has written. In places, I was brought to tears and prayers. Her inspirational book has brought me even closer to my God and Father.”

— Bruce Lyon, Pastor and blogger at thefaithofjesus.blogspot.com

God desires that all people come to salvation. This book focuses on one aspect of Soteriology: how we experience God’s salvation in the calling of the Name of the Lord. YHWH, the only true God, saves us through the Lord Jesus. A person who truly calls on the name of the Lord is fully preoccupied with YHWH and His Kingdom. We are living in a unique hour of history. Joel speaks of the final conflict that will take place in Jerusalem before the day of the LORD. In the wake of Covid-19, the day of the LORD is not only coming but is ever so near. The end times is right at our doorstep. God is raising up a remnant to call on His Name to get ready a people prepared for Jesus’ second coming. Let’s call on YHWH our King to reign in our lives as this will bring us into a dynamic partnership with our Lord Jesus now, and in the coming Kingdom to accomplish God’s ultimate purpose on earth.

ROSABLANCA SUEN was born in Hong Kong. She graduated from the University of British Columbia in Education and worked as a professional teacher in Canada. She completed her post graduate studies at Northwest Baptist Theological Seminary and Tyndale Seminary. In 1989, she and her husband joined the full-time pastoral training in Christian Disciples Church and were ordained in 1996. They served in the Shatin Church, pioneered a church in Sydney, and have been shepherding the Tsuen Wan Church in Hong Kong in the last 30 years. Their publications include *Media Photo Library of the Holy Land*, *Video Productions on The Seven Churches of Revelation*, *John at Patmos*, and *Paul at Athens*.

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SALVATION IN
THE NAME OF YHWH

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Joel 2:32, Acts 2:21, Romans 10:13

ROSABLANCA SUEN

Large Print Edition

This large-print edition is suitable for reading on a tablet or a laptop computer, and has a print book layout (e.g. footnotes are placed at the bottom of pages). Its text is identical to that of the print book (ISBN 979-8832667690) and the Kindle e-book (ASIN B0B4PCGF79) available from Amazon.com.

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Calling on the Name of the Lord

Joel 2:32, Acts 2:21, Romans 10:13



ROSABLANCA SUEN

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Salvation in the Name of YHWH: Calling on the Name of the Lord
Joel 2:32, Acts 2:21, Romans 10:13
Rosablanca Suen

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Foreword

Bentley C.F. Chan

Given the popularity of the name Joel today, it is surprising how little we know about the prophet Joel. We know almost nothing about him beyond his name and his father's name. We are not sure of his occupation (though he was familiar with the temple services) or even the historical period in which he lived (probably shortly before one of the exiles, the Assyrian or the Babylonian).

Joel is never explicitly called a prophet, not even in the book that bears his name. He is mentioned nowhere in the Old Testament outside the book of Joel (though there were others named Joel in the historical books).

Yet the name Joel means "YHWH is his God," and we read that the word of Yahweh came to Joel, the son of Pethuel. And it was through this obscure prophet that Yahweh, the God of Israel, has chosen to give one of the greatest prophetic statements in all of Scripture:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke.

The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of YHWH comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of YHWH shall be saved. (Joel 2:28-32a)

It is no exaggeration to say that this proclamation is one of the pillars of New Testament salvation—*even infusing it with Joel's special soteriological language and vocabulary*. C.H. Dodd notes that Joel “played a significant part in moulding the language in which the early Church set forth its convictions about what Christ had done and would yet do”.¹

The key sentence in Joel's proclamation—“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of YHWH shall be saved”—contains the theology of salvation in a nutshell, albeit in embryonic form. It is God's answer to the timeless question, “What must I do to be saved?” Joel's answer is simple yet far-reaching: The one who calls on the name of YHWH shall be saved. It is efficacious for salvation because it draws us directly to the very person of Yahweh our God, the one who saves.

In scope and purpose, Joel's pronouncement is eternal and not merely occasional, for it covers the sweep of God's plan of salvation, beginning with the Israel of Joel's own time and place.

Yet in Yahweh's eternal plan, Joel's pronouncement later became, on the day of Pentecost, the inaugural statement to usher in the age of the church and the Holy Spirit, thus

¹ C.H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology*, pp. 63-64, James Nisbet & Company, London, 1952.

providing the exegesis of Peter's soteriology (Acts 2:16f) and the seeds of Paul's (Romans 10:13).

We notice that Peter's statement in Acts 2:21 and Paul's in Romans 10:13 both speak of calling on the name of "the Lord" rather than on the name of YHWH (Yahweh). This adaptability is to be expected from the Jewish reluctance to vocalize the name YHWH. Yet it leads to the vital question of whether Peter and Paul also had in mind the calling on the name of Jesus.

The evidence, notably in Acts 2, points to both calling on the name of YHWH and calling on the name of Jesus, with the former being the foundation and antecedent of the latter. In his message at Pentecost, Peter cites, almost verbatim, an entire passage from Joel 2, which then becomes the wellspring for his salvation message. As a Jew, Peter would know that "the Lord" is a substitute term for YHWH, all the more so because Peter quotes extensively from Joel, even speaking of the "day of the LORD" (the day of YHWH).

Peter and Paul both refrain from modifying "call upon the name of YHWH" to "call upon the name of Jesus," preferring to leave it in its Septuagint rendering, "call upon the name of the LORD" (which would be understood as referring to YHWH if read from the LXX).

Yet at the same time, the flow of Peter's message indicates that he is drawing his listeners to salvation in the name of Jesus, the one whom God had made "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

This is neither doublespeak on Peter's part, nor an unthinking conflation of the names Yahweh and Jesus in the

title Lord, for a resolution can be found in one of Peter's key statements, embedded in his own sermon, that *the works of Jesus are ultimately God's works done "through him"*:²

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did **through him** in your midst, as you yourselves know (Acts 2:22).

Just as Yahweh is our Savior,³ so Jesus Christ is our Savior.⁴ Just as Joel 2:32 is the foundation and antecedent of Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13, so the calling on the name of YHWH is the foundation and antecedent of the calling on the name of Jesus.

In this light, I am pleased to commend to all readers the present work by Pastor Rosablanca Suen, "Salvation in the Name of YHWH". I am impressed with the title she has chosen for the book, for it immediately places our focus on the name YHWH. This is most appropriate not only because Joel 2:32 itself speaks of the name YHWH, but also because it sets right the dependence of Jesus' name upon Yahweh's.

² The dependence of Jesus' works on God's is seen in statements such as, "The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works" (John 14:10); "I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me" (8:28); "The Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does" (5:19).

³ Isaiah 43:11; 49:26; 60:16; Hosea 13:4; Titus 1:3; 1 Timothy 2:3; Jude 1:25.

⁴ Titus 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:10; 2 Peter 2:20.

Rosa deftly—and with moderation—navigates the multiple layers in Joel, whose pronouncements touch on several eras of salvation history, including Joel’s own historical setting, but also the New Testament age and even the eschatological future. For example, Joel speaks of Judah and Jerusalem in his own historical milieu, yet also in the language of eschatological fulfillment (“Judah shall be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem to all generations,” Joel 3:20).

Finally and most vitally, Rosa’s overarching purpose for her book is that people may be inspired to draw near to God by calling on His name. The book is an interweaving of biblical exposition and devotional writing that will guide the reader to God’s salvation in Jesus Christ.

To Rosa my friend and coworker over the decades, thank-you for writing this book, and may God use it to bless many to the glory of His great name, Yahweh.

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July 2021

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to my Heavenly Father for granting me salvation and giving me the new life in Christ. There is no greater privilege and joy than to be a servant of God.

I want to thank Pastor Bentley C.F. Chan for his professional guidance and the many hours of tireless work, from formatting, proofreading, editing, designing the front cover, compiling the Scripture index, to finally getting the manuscript ready for publication. It is with great joy that I have this opportunity to co-work with Bentley closely in bringing this book to reality. I've known Bentley since 1981 and we both joined the Fifth Team Full-Time training in 1989. After the training, we have been serving in different churches without any opportunity to co-work together until now, 30+ years later. I am particularly grateful for his readiness to share his insights into the more difficult Bible passages as they have helped sharpen my thinking. His diligence, attention to detail, suggestions, support, and constant encouragement on the manuscript are deeply appreciated. May God bless him and his wife in their ministry.

I would also like to thank many coworkers, pastors, brothers and sisters, and fellow teammates in different parts of the world for their involvement in proofreading and for giving me invaluable feedback. Many sacrificially spent countless hours checking the accuracy of the Bible references and statistics. Much appreciation is also due to those who

graciously helped me with their computer skills (our hard disks crashed more than once in the process of writing this book!). May the Lord reward these precious ones deeply for their faithful prayers and labor in God's love.

I am profoundly grateful to Raymond, my husband, for his friendship and partnership in the Gospel in the last 40 years. I thank him for the endless hours we patiently sat in front of the computer to go over each word of the manuscript to make sure they are worded effectively. Thank you, my love. May God's Name be glorified in our humble service to Him and His people.

After the book was first published in August 2021, many people around the world took a special interest in this work. By the Lord's grace, they find great value in the book for the reason that such a vital subject as *Calling on the name of the Lord for salvation* is scarcely found in the Christian circles. Special thanks go to many pastors and coworkers who have taken the time to contact me with their positive and invaluable feedback. After giving careful consideration to different responses and after calling on the Lord, I am inspired to release this second edition within half a year. Some points have been restructured to give more clarity to the presentation. Further attention is given to Joel chapter 3 to make the exposition fuller. The final prophecies of Joel point to the coming Kingdom. Calling on the name of the Lord has a broader vision that goes beyond a personal salvation. A person who truly calls on the name of YHWH will be preoccupied with God and His Kingdom. I am indeed grateful to coworkers who have been working hard to get this book

translated into other languages. May God's Name be proclaimed in all corners of the world. May God use this book for His own glory to bring many to salvation in His Name.

Book Review

By Greg S. Deuble

A BOOK REVIEW OF SALVATION IN THE NAME OF YHWH
An Exposition of Joel 2:32, Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13

When Rosa emailed me to ask if I would write a review for her book, *Salvation in the Name of YHWH*, I have to be honest and say that, at first, I was hesitant.

Firstly, I did not know Rosa. I had never heard of her, or her husband Raymond, or of their devotion to the people of Hong Kong in a ministry spanning a number of decades, until her request popped up in my inbox.

Secondly, the request came at a particularly demanding time in my own schedule. I felt that if I took this task on, I would be needing lots of extra time — and energy!

However, I am so thankful to Rosa for contacting me, for I had hardly entered the first pages of her book when I began to find my heart “strangely warmed”. I found my spirit witnessing with her spirit. I found myself coming alive inside. I found myself shouting, “Amen!” Here is a kindred spirit and one whose heart has been mightily touched by the Spirit of God and by the truth of our salvation from Yahweh God in His Son, our risen Lord Jesus Christ. Her passion and love for the one true God of the Bible (whose personal name is Yahweh),

and for his people, and for the “lost” He is lovingly calling to Himself, I found irresistible. And it’s all laid out in an easily readable style.

But someone may ask, “Why another book about God and salvation? There are already a plethora of them! What will I get from reading *Salvation in the Name of YHWH* that I won’t get in most other books purporting to present the same theme?”

My unhesitating answer is that you will get a vital message that most others do not lay out: If we would be saved and know the power and hope of the living God in our lives, then we must learn to call out to Him with an audible and daily cry from our hearts. Rosa unpacks this essential Biblical teaching for the reader pithily and practically, spanning both Old and New Testaments. As she writes, “The text doesn’t say, ‘call on God’ ”. We are to learn to love and to trust in the personal Name of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ — Yahweh — by articulating it audibly, but not as some magical repetitious incantation, but as a real cry from our hearts to the personal God who delights in the prayers of His people.

In this little book you will see how to revitalize a flagging prayer and devotional life, which is something many Christians struggle with in today’s challenging environment. Rosa makes it personal as she shares from her own ups and downs over many long years. Her practical help is undergirded by a scholarly backbone, being firmly grounded in the context and grammar of the Scriptures.

I thoroughly recommend *Salvation in the Name of YHWH* to every thirsty soul who wants a more dynamic walk with the

Living God of the Bible. I am thankful to Rosa for asking me to read her book. And above all, I stand in awe of our Yahweh God, our heavenly Father, for leading her to email me with her request!

With heartfelt thanks and prayers that others will be mightily touched as I have been!

Pastor Greg S. Deuble, Australia

August 9, 2021

<https://thebiblejesus.com/about-me>

Book Review

By Kenneth LaPrade

A BOOK REVIEW by Kenneth LaPrade

Salvation in the Name of YHWH

(An Exposition of Joel 2:32, Acts 2:21, and Romans 10:13)

I would like to heartily endorse this wonderful, enlightening work of Biblical scholarship about a topic so relevant to monotheistic studies regarding the identity and faithful activity of YHWH (Yahweh), the one true God and his unique Son, the lord Jesus the Messiah (the Anointed One.)

“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of YHWH shall be saved.” (Joel 2:32)

This key truth from the book of Joel (within its vital setting) is later quoted in Peter’s Pentecostal thesis in Acts, chapter 2, and also in Paul’s dynamic salvation message for Jews and Gentiles in Romans, chapters 9-11. All three contexts are systematically developed in this eye-opening book which offers a special, logical approach to word study priorities.

On top of the valuable points made here concerning accurate Biblical integrity, personal “fruit” from the writer shines brightly throughout her well-researched theme; the author (Rosablanca Suen) is someone who has practiced continually “calling on the name of YHWH” and, also, “calling on the name of the lord Jesus” for decades! She displays very

lucidly how these two aspects (calling on Yahweh and calling on Jesus) are perfectly harmonious. Heart and lifestyle are integral, rather than superficial formulaic approaches. She is extremely thankful for precise Biblical training and an emerging awareness of Biblical monotheistic truth learned directly from Eric H.H. Chang (the author of the detailed masterpieces: *The Only True God: A Study of Biblical Monotheism* and *The Only Perfect Man: The Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ*.) She is also quite thankful for others who have lovingly helped her in her faith journey.

The clear dominance of the word YHWH in the book of Joel is beautifully highlighted within the context of all 16 significant terms used in Joel. The importance of God's personal name is appropriately emphasized; God was never a vague, general reality for devout, ancient Israelites! Also, key phrases about YHWH are carefully explained: "the day of YHWH", "YHWH your God", "the house of YHWH", "O YHWH", and "the ministers of YHWH." Despite upcoming judgments to come on "the day of YHWH", salvation is offered to those (like Joel himself) who faithfully call on the name of YHWH. Whether in prayer or in proclaiming God's unique virtues, calling audibly on His name from the heart is a reality heard and answered by Yahweh! By the way, the name "Joel" means "Yahweh is God." He – Yahweh – must be known personally!

Practical reminders (with several citations from Psalms and other Scriptures) are given to help us not to be distracted from calling on His name and seeking His face (or His presence) in intimate prayers. Heartfelt intercession for others is shown to

be vital. The depth of repentance from a contrite heart is also key. Such dynamic themes in the book of Joel are totally applicable to us nowadays, as we truly know that the future day of YHWH is approaching! Blessings from the one true God, both physically and spiritually, are present upon those who call on the name of YHWH from the heart!

The book then moves into the quoting of Joel 2:32 in Acts 2:21 within the context of Peter's Pentecostal message (Acts 2:14-40) and the wider context of the entire book of Acts. Just as Joel is a Yahweh-centered book, Acts is a God-centered book – in which *theos* (God) refers to the same YHWH who permeates Old Testament records. In 30 prominent words used in Acts such an emphasis is quite clear. Also, 24 significant words in the Pentecostal message (2:14-40) are given, showing a keen emphasis on God Himself, Jesus' being chosen (as a man), his death, his resurrection, and his bold exaltation – as lord and Christ. It is very important how relevant prophecies by David and Joel are fulfilled. Also, God's spirit being poured out freely in an unlimited way is very significant, so that presently, greater numbers of people (with genuine spiritual insights) can continually speak God's Kingdom truths in powerful ways!

God's perfectly planned salvation agenda through Jesus, the Anointed Messiah and lord (*kyrios*) is wonderfully elucidated in the book's meticulous study of this Pentecostal sermon, the rest of the book of Acts, and several other New Testament Scriptures. It is illustrated clearly that Jesus' exaltation to God's right hand (as in Psalm 110:1) is totally compatible with consistent, Biblical monotheism. This chapter about

the meaningful event on Pentecost further describes and summarizes detailed insights about authentic change (or repentance), baptism as united with Christ, the essential reception of holy spirit, what spiritual thinking and living truly looks like, calling on the name of YHWH, calling on Jesus as lord, the future day of the Lord, present and future Kingdom of God realities, and “being saved from this crooked generation.”

The remaining chapter focuses on the citation of Joel 2:32 in Romans 10:13 within the context of Romans 9-11, a section concerning the salvation of Israel (and also of Gentiles). Key terms in this section (22 of them) are carefully considered. The dilemma of Israel’s widespread rejection of the Messiah is addressed. The distinction between ethnic Israel and the remnant of spiritual Israel is thoughtfully discussed. The merciful inclusion of Gentiles is logically explained. Statements about the stumbling stone are carefully analyzed. Chapter ten’s significant words and salvation themes (along with confession and believing) are beautifully described. God’s overall fairness to both Jews and Gentiles is very evident. There is then a major thesis comparing Joel 2:32 in the Septuagint (Greek) to Paul’s quoting of it in Romans 10:13. The compatibility of using this quote to call directly on YHWH or to call on Jesus (as *kyrios* – lord), as God’s unique representative, is clarified in great depth.

The epilogue of the book, “from a pastor’s heart”, summarizes the above observations with a diagram illustrating YHWH’s willingness and ability to save those who honestly call on Him. His plan of salvation through Jesus is

then expounded, highlighting his role as an exalted man now seated at the right hand of God. We currently await the hope of his return with great joy – when all things will be subjected to God.

Three useful appendices give careful sentence block diagrams of Joel 2:28-32, Acts 2, and Romans 9-11.

Pastor Kenneth LaPrade, Texas

November 20, 2021

Preface to the Second Edition

God desires that all people come to salvation. I am deeply grateful to my Heavenly Father for saving me from sin and granting me the new life in Christ in my early teens. Ever since then, God has put in my heart a deep hunger and thirst for Him and His Kingdom. I always cry out to God, “O LORD, I want to know you more and follow you all the days of my life.”

In 2005, I came to have a clear understanding of God’s salvation for mankind through a series of teaching on Biblical monotheism given by our beloved teacher, Pastor Eric H.H. Chang. Being able to sit in teaching sessions taught by Pastor Eric was a great privilege and blessing to all our coworkers. We would get inspired spiritually. Our spirits would get uplifted. The fire of God would burn deeply in our hearts. God opened our eyes to see Biblical truths through His servant.

This book comes from Chapter 17 of a longer book (400+ pages) that I am currently working on, “Our Road to the One True God, YHWH,” which, if God willing, will be published at a later date. As I was working on this chapter on “Salvation in the Name of YHWH,” the Spirit of God kept urging me to write a more thorough exposition of Joel 2:32, “And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” This significant statement is cited by the

apostle Peter in Acts 2:21, and the apostle Paul in Romans 10:13. A lot of spiritual riches are packed in this short statement regarding God's salvation for humanity and how we can live a life of faith prayerfully under the Lordship of God and Jesus Christ. We call on the name of the LORD for the empowering of the Spirit so that we can fulfill the mission given to the Church. In the course of meditation and writing, the freshness of the content has taken on a new life such that the present work is put into a short book for people to use in evangelism.

Calling on the Name of the LORD has been a life-long spiritual discipline in my life. Through God's Name, we meet with the one true God. God is not silent. He is silent only to those who resist drawing near to Him. I have learned to call on God's Name to love Him, walk with Him, learn to be His friend, and let God come close to me in all areas of my life. I call on God's Name to save me from selfishness, self-deception, temptations to sin, and pride. Daily, I call out to God to cleanse and purify my inner being. Many times, God rescued me physically even before I knew that my life was in great danger. Living in a complacent world in which Christians are falling asleep spiritually, I often need to cry out to God for His fire to burn fervently within me so that my heart does not grow cold. Calling on the Name of the LORD has indeed taught me to have the right fear of God. In serving the church these past 30 years, I have learned to call on the LORD to mourn for the sins of the church and to overcome weaknesses that hinder my service to Him. God answers. God saves.

We experience God's salvation by calling on His Name, not only in times of crisis but more so in every breath that we take each day. It is in the many ordinary events of life that God awakens us to experience His care, presence, protection, and salvation.

Salvation is a vast subject. This book focuses on one aspect of Soteriology: how we experience salvation in the calling of the Name of YHWH. The Gospel message that we hear today is mainly centered on the popular precept that Jesus saves us. This raises a question: How does Jesus save us? Apparently, the role of YHWH as Savior has been obliterated. After listening to Pastor Eric's expositions on Biblical monotheism, I searched the Scripture and consolidated the conclusion that YHWH God is the One who saves us through Jesus. On the surface, most Christians unwittingly accept this statement to be true; however the identity of God needs to be understood in light of Scripture. Who is God? The God of the Bible is YHWH. And as we focus to call on YHWH, we will be able to correctly identify "this Jesus whom God raised up" (Acts 2:32) for our salvation.

I would like to share my first-hand experience and understanding on this Biblical theme that YHWH God saves us through "this Jesus" preached by the first century apostles. Our faith in God and Jesus needs to be grounded on the authority of the Word of God.

I have also woven into the writing a Biblical word study method to help readers understand the broader themes that emerge from the book of Joel, Peter's sermon in Acts 2, and the overall salvation message in Romans 9 to 11. In a wider

framework of these three passages, we can get a bird's eye view to see the wood for the trees. Tables and graphs are provided for readers to see Scriptural evidences vividly.

In this book, you will discover the key to a vibrant prayer life. Calling on the LORD has a much broader vision that goes beyond a personal salvation. Unfortunately, most churches proclaim a Gospel that tells people to accept Jesus into their hearts to be their personal Savior. As a result, most Christians have become very individualistic. We have subtly allowed self-interest and the trend of rampant individualism in our culture to distort our understanding of God's saving work. God saves us so that we can be a part of His new creation to live for His Kingdom. Calling on the name of the LORD is much bigger than ourselves. As we call on the name of the LORD, we call with His Kingdom in view. In this new creation, God is preparing "a royal priesthood" (1Pet 2:9) and He wants us to co-reign with Christ in the coming Kingdom. Sadly, too many Christians are pew sitters and have not begun to live for the Kingdom. Many are church goers but not Kingdom lovers. A majority of Christians has been hypnotized to believe that the goal of salvation is to go to heaven when they die. On the contrary, what is taught in the Bible is that God makes them "*a kingdom* and priests to our God and they shall reign on the *earth*" (Rev 5:10), and they will reign with Christ for a thousand years (Rev 20:6). Tragically, down through the centuries, the Church has lost the vision of the Kingdom.

Prophecies are fulfilled in progressive stages. The outpouring of the Spirit given to the Jews at Pentecost and

later to the Gentiles is for the purpose of advancing God's Kingdom. The Church is given the task to live out the life of the Kingdom. The prophecies in Joel ultimately point to the future when Christ sets up the Kingdom on earth to rule over Israel and the world until all the enemies are destroyed. Judah and Jerusalem will be fully restored (Joel 3:1). Jerusalem will be holy and foreigners will never overrun her again (Joel 3:17). Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem to all generations (Joel 3:20). The hope of salvation is that God will tabernacle with His people forever on earth. The final words of Joel seal this great promise that "YHWH dwells in Zion" (Joel 3:21).

We are living in a unique hour of history. Joel speaks of the final conflict that will take place in Jerusalem before the day of the LORD. In the wake of Covid-19, the day of the LORD is not only coming but ever so near. The end times is right at our doorstep. Are you prepared? Earthquakes, wars, famine and pestilences that are escalating in intensity are signs of the end times. All these are but the beginning of birth pangs leading to the imminent coming of the Lord. The church age will soon come to an end. This is the time to put our house in order for "behold, the Judge is standing at the door" (Jam 5:9). You and I need to wake up (Joel 1:5; Rev 3:2), keep awake (Mk 13:33) and stay awake (Mk 13:35, 37) to *get ready* for "that Day". Many will fall by the wayside, but there is a remnant whom YHWH calls (Joel 2:32). The remnant is empowered by the Spirit to be messengers of God and His Kingdom in these end times. There is little time remaining to finish the Great Commission. Christians are commissioned "to make disciples

of *all nations*” (Mt 28:19) by proclaiming “*the Gospel of the Kingdom*” before the end comes (Mt 24:14). God’s heart is that “all Israel will be saved” (Rom 11:26).

This is the hour to call on the name of YHWH. Time and tide wait for no one. God is raising up a remnant to call on His Name. The one who truly calls on the name of YHWH will be fully preoccupied with YHWH and His Kingdom. “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your Name. *Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth* as it is in heaven.” (Mt 6:9-10) Let’s call on YHWH our King to reign in our lives, for this brings us into a dynamic partnership with our Lord Jesus now and in the coming Kingdom to accomplish God’s ultimate purpose on earth.

The Kingdom of God is advancing mightily and steadily according to His time. The exciting news is that God’s Kingdom is dynamically coming ever nearer to us. Are you part of this movement of God in advancing His Kingdom on earth? Our time is running out.

In our outreach work at church, people often ask me about God’s salvation for mankind and how they can be saved. I pray that this book can answer some of their questions so that they too can experience God’s salvation. I also welcome my readers to write and share your thoughts with me.

My prayer is that Yahweh, my God and King, will stir a hunger in your heart to call on His Name. May God be pleased to use this book to lead people to saving faith in the one true God and in Lord Jesus the Messiah.

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Chapter 1

Joel 2:32

“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the **Lord** shall be saved.”

Calling on the name of the LORD concerns our salvation. The message of Joel centers on God’s relationship with His people. The intimacy of this relationship depends on our ardent desire to call His Name. Joel 2:32 is cited twice in the New Testament (Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13). Calling on the name of the LORD is indeed a significant subject that threads through the Old Testament to the New.

Ever since the beginning of Genesis, people have been calling on the name of the LORD (Gen 4:26). From generation to generation, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Aaron, Samuel, David, Elijah, Jonah, the Psalmists and the prophets habitually called on the name of the LORD (Gen 12:8; 13:4; 21:33; 26:25; 1Ki 18:24; Ps 99:6; 116:4, 13, 17; Lam 3:55 etc.; though cp. Gen 12:8 and Ex 6:3). Calling on the name of the LORD is a vast subject that deals with the spiritual discipline of prayer life as well as the proclamation of the Name. In this book, we will only be able to scrape the surface of what it means to call on the name of the LORD. At the very least, we can make an initial

start in calling on the name of the LORD since our salvation is a result of such a call.

The Name of YHWH

The “LORD” in small capitals signifies that the original word in the Hebrew Bible is יהוה (YHWH). YHWH is God’s name. Our God is a personal God with a Name.

The text for Joel 2:32 should be rendered:

“Everyone who calls on
the name of YHWH will be saved.”

Take note of the specific wording: “Everyone who calls on the name of YHWH”. The text doesn’t say to call on “God,” which is a generic term, but specifically to call on YHWH for our salvation. God and Lord are titles but they are not names. YHWH is the name of the one true God whom we call on.

In the Hebrew Bible, God’s name יהוה (YHWH) occurs 6828 times!⁵ This high frequency of occurrences is astounding. Our God is so willing to reveal Himself to us in a most direct way through His personal Name.

⁵ The statistics are taken from the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) which is an eclectic edition for text critical issues; edited by Elliger, Rudolph, & Weil; 5th edition; Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1997.

YHWH in its full transliterated form is Yahweh.⁶ In the name of Yahweh, we have salvation. Salvation is in Yahweh. We call on Yahweh, for Yahweh is the One who saves us.

When I call on Yahweh, I witness God’s saving power in action.

YHWH – A Key Word in Joel

In the book of Joel, God’s name יהוה occurs 33 times.⁷ In Old Testament times, the people of God knew God by His personal Name. Yahweh is not a remote God somewhere out there in the universe, but a personable God whom the Israelites related to in their prayers. When they prayed, they would often address God by His Name.

⁶ There is still an ongoing debate among Hebrew scholars regarding the precise vocalization of “YHWH”, but with the immense progress made in the study of Hebrew in the last century, Biblical scholars generally agree that the pronunciation of YHWH is Yahweh.

⁷ In the table, the statistics for the occurrences of YHWH for each chapter of Joel are taken from the Leningrad Codex. The statistics can be tabulated from the Bible statistics tool at the following website: <http://yahwehdehua.net/cn/wfstats/ot>. Select the book of Joel, key in H3068 which is the Strong’s number for יהוה (translated as LORD) and H3069 which is another Strong’s number for יהוה (translated as GOD). Then hit Search.

The Book of Joel				Chapter			
Strong's Number	Hebrew	Transliteration	Translation	1	2	3	Total
H3068	יהוה	YHWH	Yahweh	7	18	8	33

The book of Joel is Yahweh centered. The name “Yahweh” occurs in all three chapters, with a significant concentration in chapter 2.

Joel begins with the “word of Yahweh” coming to him (1:1). Yahweh has a message to give to His people through the prophet Joel, the son of Pethuel. The book ends with the final words, “Yahweh dwells in Zion” (3:21). From beginning to end, Yahweh is fully present with His people.

The word for “God,” אלהים (*Elohim*), occurs 11 times. Sometimes it is “my God” (1:13), or “our God” (1:16), or “their God” (2:17), or “your God” (1:13). The Name Yahweh is attached to God seven times — “Yahweh your God” (1:14; 2:13, 14, 23, 26, 27; 3:17). The Israelites knew God personally by His Name, Yahweh.

Significant Words in Joel

We can get an overview of the book of Joel by doing a thorough word study on all the significant words used in the book. In the following table, words that occur 10 times or

more in Joel are listed.⁸ More words can be listed in the table but for efficiency, I limit the list to these words to demonstrate how useful information can be drawn from the data.

Book of Joel – Significant words				Chapters			
Strong's Number	Hebrew	Translation	Parts of Speech	1	2	3	Total
H3068	יהוה	Yahweh	noun	7	18	8	33
H3588	כי	that, because	conj	11	13	8	32
H5921	על	upon, over	prep	6	9	4	19
H0853	את	(untranslated)	particle	0	8	8	16
H3605	כול / כל	all, the whole	noun/adj	5	5	6	16
H1121	בן	children	noun	6	2	7	15
H3117	יום	day	noun	4	6	3	13
H5971	עם	people	noun	0	10	3	13
H0413	אל	into	prep	4	4	4	12
H0776	ארץ	earth	noun	3	6	3	12
H0834	אשר	which	pronoun	1	6	5	12
H3808	לה	not	adverb	1	9	2	12
H0430	אלהים	Elohim / God	noun	4	6	1	11
H1961	היה	to be	verb	2	5	4	11
H0398	אכל	devour, eat	verb	5	5	0	10
H1471	גוי / גי	nations	noun	1	2	7	10

⁸ The statistics for all the Hebrew words for each chapter of Joel are taken from the Leningrad Codex. The table statistics can be tabulated with the Bible statistics tool at <http://yahwehdehua.net/cn/wfstats/ot>. Select the book of Joel, key in 1:1 to 3:21, and hit search.

(1) Putting all the significant words in table format can reveal some major themes of the book of Joel efficiently at one glance. Strong's numbers are provided for those who do not read Hebrew.

(2) For the sake of thoroughness, all the usages of conjunctions, prepositions, and pronouns are included in the tabulation even though these words might not carry particular significance in the initial observations. Naturally, these words would occur frequently as they are necessary for proper sentence structure.

(3) The Name YHWH has the highest frequency of 33 occurrences, even above all the conjunctive and prepositional words. Evidently, Yahweh is the focus of attention in Joel.

(4) Nouns often reveal key concepts of a book. The major nouns in Joel are: all (16 times), children (15 times), day (13 times), people (13 times), earth (12 times), God (11 times), and nations (10 times).

(5) Verbs are also important for they are action words that often point to life applications. Take note of two verbs, "to be" (11 times) and "devour" (10 times). "To be" is a common verb that is used frequently in sentences, and we should pay particular attention to the tenses used. "Devour" or "eat" has a high frequency of occurrence, and is found only in chapters 1 and 2.

(6) Even though some words may not have a high frequency of occurrence in the book, they are significant for the overall theme of Joel. For example, the word “call” occurs only 6 times, yet the action of calling is crucial to our spiritual life. Another example is the mentioning of places: Jerusalem occurs 6 times (5 times in chapter 3); Zion occurs 7 times (4 times in chapter 2, and 3 times in chapter 3); Judah occurs 6 times (all occurrences in chapter 3); Israel 3 times (once in chapter 2 and twice in chapter 3) — these places bear great significance in the book of Joel, particularly in chapter 3. “Valley of Jehoshaphat” is mentioned twice (3:2, 12) and is prophetically significant as it is a “valley of decision” (3:14, 14), the place of the final conflict where God will judge all the nations.

The Word Statistics Method

The Bible word statistics method is a reliable tool for exegetical studies as it leads to conclusions objectively and scientifically. In our full-time pastoral training, Pastor Eric taught us how to use the Bible word statistics method in the New Testament survey. The exegetical principles of the method can also be used to study the Old Testament. Use this tool to discover Biblical truths for yourself. All interpretations need to be based on the authority of God’s Word.

In this book, I will not be able to go into the detail of the word statistics method. Basic steps are laid out to help readers identify major themes:

- (1) Observe the words that are used frequently in the entire book as well as in each chapter.
- (2) Identify the *key words* or *phrases*.
- (3) Look up the *definitions* of the words in the original language.⁹
- (4) *Analyze* how and where these words occur in the book.
- (5) Note their *emphases*.
- (6) *Interpret* the text correctly within the historical, cultural and literary *context* of the passage, the book, and the entire Bible.

This basic word study approach serves as building blocks to more advanced word studies. Language is built on root words and related words within the family group, therefore it is necessary to explore the synonyms, antonyms and all their cognate forms for a broader understanding of a key word. Bear in mind that words have different nuances and they are not necessarily used in the same way throughout the Bible. Different authors may use the same word but give different shades of meaning for their purposes.

⁹ For the Old Testament, consult the Brown-Driver-Briggs *Hebrew and English Lexicon* (BDB) and *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (TDOT). For the New Testament, consult Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT), Bauer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, and Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

As I prayerfully dig into the specific details of the word study, I often get practical insights into applying God’s word to my daily life.

Key phrases in relation to YHWH

Many careful steps need to be taken in the word study method before one can draw conclusions on the theme of the book. It is important to observe recurring phrases as some words do not carry much significance on their own. For example, the standalone word “day” does not carry any significant meaning, but when “day” is studied in the context of the phrase “the day of YHWH”, the phrase bears deep meaning.

In doing word studies, observe recurring words in phrases and analyze how they are used in relation to each other.

Here are some key phrases that are used in relation to the key word “YHWH” in Joel:

1. The day of YHWH (1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14)
2. YHWH your God (1:14; 2:13, 14, 23, 26, 27; 3:17)
3. The house of YHWH (1:9, 14; 3:18)
4. O YHWH (1:19; 2:17; 3:11)
5. The ministers of YHWH (1:9; 2:17)

“YHWH your God” (7 times) and “the day of YHWH” (5 times) are the two prominent key phrases in Joel. The word “day” occurs 13 times in Joel, of which 9 times are used in

reference to “the day of Yahweh” (1:15, 15; 2:1, 2, 2, 11, 31; 3:14, 18). The theme “the day of Yahweh” runs through the entire book. Joel warns of the approaching judgment when Yahweh God will reward the faithful and punish the wicked. Joel’s prophecies foreshadow a future day of Yahweh when God’s final judgment will come upon all nations. It is prophetically the day when the Messiah will return to earth to deliver Israel from all her enemies.

Key points in the book of Joel

Once the primary theme is identified, we can analyze how the significant phrases and words relate to each other. In the following paragraph, the significant words and phrases are underlined to show their relationship to the overall theme of Joel.

All the inhabitants, children and people, need to know and learn about the day (1:2-3). The locusts devour their crops so completely that the land is devastated to an extreme crisis. All the trees of the field are burnt and dried up (1:10-12; 19-20). The ministers of YHWH are instructed to call a solemn fast to cry out to YHWH. The grain offerings and drink offerings had been cut off from the house of YHWH. Their worship to God has been disrupted. It is a day of judgment. The day of YHWH is a day of judgment, but also a day of salvation to those who call on YHWH. One day, the earth will quake and the heavens will tremble with cosmic signs of blood and fire. Not only the day of YHWH is coming (2:31), the day of YHWH is near (1:15; 2:1; 3:14). The day of YHWH is fearful, who can endure

it? (2:11) While there is still time to repent, Joel calls the Israelites to return to YHWH with all their hearts before the day comes (2:12-13). Blessings will come with the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh (2:28-29). God has spoken repeatedly to His people, “I am YHWH, your God” (2:27; 3:17). YHWH God challenges all the surrounding nations to prepare for war against Him, but the people of God need not fear, for YHWH is a refuge and stronghold to His people (3:16-17). By trusting in YHWH, the Israelites are instructed to call on YHWH for salvation (2:32). Salvation will come to Judah and Jerusalem and they will be inhabited forever from generation to generation (3:20). YHWH dwells with them in Zion (3:21).

Acknowledge that YHWH is your God

Not everyone can call on the Name of Yahweh. To call on the Name of Yahweh, you must acknowledge that Yahweh is God. Joel is a prophet who knows Yahweh intimately as his God. The name “Joel” means “Yahweh is God”. This is an honorable name. Many parents like to choose the name Joel for their children.

Is Yahweh your God? If Yahweh is not your God, how would it benefit you to call on the Name, Yahweh?

“I am Yahweh your God” – spoken by Yahweh

God says directly to the people, “I am Yahweh your God”. Yahweh is the only God and there is no other.

Joel 2:27 “You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that *I am Yahweh your God*, and *there is none else*.” (ESV, Yahweh restored and italics added)

Joel 3:17 “So you shall know that *I am Yahweh your God* who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain.” (ESV, Yahweh restored and italics added)

Here are some points that can be developed progressively:

- i) “I am *Yahweh*”. The first thing God wants to draw your attention to is that God has a Name, and His Name is Yahweh. God is Yahweh.
- ii) “I am Yahweh *your God*”. Acknowledge Yahweh as *your* God before you call on Yahweh.
- iii) “I am Yahweh your God” occurs more than 30 times in the Old Testament. It is a personal message that God often gives to His people. God spoke these words to the Israelites when He delivered them from the bondage under the Egyptians (Ex 6:7). Know that Yahweh is a personable God who truly cares for you as He did for the Israelites.
- iv) “I am Yahweh your God *and there is none else*” (Joel 2:27). There is only one God and He is called Yahweh. The first commandment is: “I am Yahweh your God ... you shall have no other gods before me” (Ex 20:2-3). Yahweh God warns against idolatry. “There is none else” means that there is no other god equal to Yahweh or besides Him (Deut 4:35, 39; Isa 45:5, 6, 14, 18, 21, 22;

46:9). To call on the name Yahweh means that you worship only one God, and the one God is Yahweh.

- v) “*Yahweh dwells in Zion*” is stated twice in Joel (3:17, 21). God’s very presence will be revealed in Zion. God chooses Zion to live there with His people forever. All the people will know that God is Yahweh.

“Yahweh your God” – spoken by Joel

In speaking directly to the people, Joel is speaking to an audience who acknowledge Yahweh as their God. Joel specifically uses the phrase “Yahweh your God” five times:

- i) “the house of Yahweh your God” (1:14)
- ii) “return to Yahweh your God” (2:13)
- iii) “a grain offering and a drink offering for Yahweh your God” (2:14)
- iv) “rejoice in Yahweh your God” (2:23)
- v) “praise the Name of Yahweh your God who has dealt wondrously with you” (2:26)

The basic foundation of calling on the Name of Yahweh is to know that God’s Name is Yahweh and to acknowledge Yahweh as your God.

O YHWH

“O YHWH” is found in all three chapters of Joel. Joel is a man of God who knows how to call on the Name of Yahweh, and Yahweh answers him. Prayers do not need to be long. The most vital part in prayer is to connect to God through His Name. Calling on Yahweh is so much a part of Joel’s life that whenever he comes to God in prayer, he immediately calls, “O YHWH”.

Joel 1:19a “To you, O YHWH, I call”

Joel 2:17b “Spare your people O YHWH”

Joel 3:11b “Bring down your warriors O YHWH”

The calling of YHWH looks simple but in actual fact, it is a life-long training for all prophets and men of God who have truly learned to pray. Do not be fooled by its simplicity. Calling “O YHWH” requires commitment, perseverance and persistence.

Calling on Yahweh is not simply saying “O YHWH” and invoking His Name mechanically. Joel lives a life of calling on the Name of Yahweh. Other servants of God also live a life of calling “O YHWH”: Moses (Num 10:35, 36, etc), David (1Sam 23:10, 11 etc), Solomon (1Ki 3:7; 8:23, 25, etc), Elijah (1Ki 18:36, 37, etc), Elisha (2Ki 6:17, 20 etc), Hezekiah (2Ki 19:15, 16, 17 etc), Ezra (Ezra 9:15), Nehemiah (Neh 1:5), Isaiah (Isa 25:1, 63:16, 17 etc), Jeremiah (Jer 10:23, 24, etc), Daniel (Dan 9:8), Hosea (Hos 9:14), Jonah (Jonah 2:6, 4:2,3 etc), Habakkuk

(Hab 1:2, 12, etc), and the Psalmists. These men of God are men of intense prayer.

In his book, Joel does not explain in detail the calling of “O YHWH” because he is not teaching us how to pray. Therefore, further elaboration will be given in the following exposition to lay down some basic spiritual principles behind the calling of Yahweh.

Psalmists call “O YHWH”

The book of Psalms is a book of prayer. What is striking is that the Psalmists constantly call on the name of Yahweh: “O YHWH” (Ps 3:3, 7; 5:1, 3, 8; 6:1, 2, 3, 4; 7:1, 3, 6, 8; 8:1, 9; 9:1, 13, 19, 20; etc). They repeatedly call “O YHWH” even within one single prayer.

For example, in Psalm 7, David calls YHWH four times:

- O YHWH my God (v.1)
- O YHWH my God (v.3)
- Arise, O YHWH (v.6)
- O YHWH (v.8).

Why is the name “Yahweh” repeated so often in a single prayer? Is this just a poetic way of praying?

In Psalm 3, the name “Yahweh” is repeated 6 times within 8 verses. The Psalmist is calling Yahweh in almost every sentence.

- O YHWH (v.1)
- But you O YHWH, are a shield about me (v.3)
- I cried aloud to YHWH and he answered me (v.4)
- I woke again, for YHWH sustained me (v.5)
- Arise, O YHWH! Save me O my God! (v.7)
- Salvation belongs to YHWH, your blessings be on your people! (v.8)

Such repetition of calling the Name deserves our attention. Obviously, the repetition implies a deep focus on and intimacy with Yahweh. To be able to stay focused on God in prayer requires spiritual concentration.

Let's follow the examples of the Psalmists and make it our life-long practice to call on the name of Yahweh. Sadly this practice is almost lost in the busy life of our modern day churches. You need to put in extra time to focus on God and come into His presence every day.

From my own experience, a proper preparation of heart is necessary before calling the Name "Yahweh". But the sad situation is that most Christians cannot even find twenty minutes to quiet before God in the morning.

You may know a lot about God through reading or listening to sermons, but you only meet with God *directly* through calling His Name. Make it a habit to go before God to call His Name. In His Name, God reveals Himself personally to you. What you need is not more knowledge but to live a life with God through calling His Name.

To you O YHWH

Joel 1:19-20 To you, O YHWH, I call. For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and flame has burned all the trees of the field. Even the beasts of the field pant for you because the water brooks are dried up, and fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness. (ESV, YHWH restored and boldface added)

Joel cries out to Yahweh for the devastating locust plague had destroyed the crops. The locust plague, the drought, and the famine were “a destruction that came from the Almighty” (Joel 1:15). Joel is telling the people that the national crisis they are in is not a result of a natural disaster, but is an act from God. So severe was God’s judgment that food was cut off before their eyes (v.16), seed shriveled under the clods, storehouses were ruined, granaries broke down because the grains dried up (v.17), the cattle moaned because of no pasture, and the flocks of sheep suffered (v.18). The destruction on the land was God’s judgment on His rebellious people. The raging fire destroyed everything (v.19). The land was threatened by successive crises. Even the beasts of the field panted for God (v.20) and the creation groaned.

But what about God’s people? It seems that God’s people are always imperceptive of God’s judgment. Down through the centuries, people often get very offended by a loving God who brings judgment onto them.

It is in the middle of talking about God’s judgment on the nation that Joel calls out to God, “To you, O YHWH, I call”.

Here, we can get a small glimpse of Joel's prayer life and learn some essential spiritual principles in the calling of God's Name.

O YHWH – Address God's Name in prayer

True prayer is to connect with God through His Name. Joel addresses God by His Name "Yahweh" when he prays. This is the basic foundation of prayer, yet many Christians skip this step. In the original Hebrew, the word "O" is not there. There is a practical reason why the "O" is added before the Name. The English translators added the "O" to communicate the necessity of a deep reverence when calling the name Yahweh. In classical addresses, the "O" usually precedes the name when the person is formally addressed. We do not call the name "Yahweh" in a detached way. Neither do we call "Yahweh" like we call our friends and buddies. The Hebrew people in the OT call "YHWH" the one true God with deep reverence in adoration. Every time I call "YHWH" or "O YHWH", I come before God with a godly fear and deep devotion to give Yahweh my all.

Do you address God's Name when you pray? When we want to talk to another person, we would usually call the person's name, wouldn't we? We would address the person by his name when we talk to him directly. Even if he has a title, we would address his title with his name. Calling on the Name of Yahweh is the path to connecting *directly* with the living God.

Many Christians tell me that they don't know how to pray. They say they are not good with words. A few years ago, an elderly lady in the church told me that she wanted to pray like her pastor. She wanted to know how to compose all these beautiful words. Prayer, first and foremost, is to connect with God through His Name, and then the words will come. If we do not make contact with God first, yet start talking, we have not begun to pray. We would just end up talking to ourselves and not to God.

We make prayer so difficult because we have skipped the initial step of connecting with God through His Name. Today, Christians are in a pitiful state as they don't know God's Name and the importance of God's Name. Visitors coming to our church for the first time often ask us about the name of Yahweh for they don't hear Yahweh mentioned in other churches. Christians may have a lot of information about God, yet Yahweh is foreign to them. Start with a desire to know Yahweh.

Point 1 – To You

“To you” are two small words that can easily go unnoticed, but they are the two most important words when it comes to the direction of prayer. “To you O YHWH” is to *turn your full attention to Yahweh*.

In Hebrew, the word אֵלֶיךָ (to you) has the preposition אֶל which can be translated as “towards, into, to”. The preposition denotes “a motion to or a direction towards, whether physical or mental” (BDB). When Joel calls out to Yahweh, he *turns his*

heart towards Yahweh. Similarly, when the Psalmists pray, their hearts are turned towards Yahweh.

Psalm 25:1 “*To You, O YHWH, I lift up my soul.*”

Psalm 28:1 “*To You, O YHWH, I call.*”

Psalm 30:8 “*To You, O YHWH, I cry.*”

Turn your whole attention towards Yahweh. How? You must turn away from the “self” and look outward “to You” Yahweh. Many Christians have difficulty directing their attention to God. As soon as they close their eyes, they are still thinking about their own little world, their families, their jobs, and their problems. Their minds are very much preoccupied with their own needs. Their whole being turns inward when they pray. The result is that they say a lot in their prayers, but it is all a monologue. It is like the Pharisee in Luke 18:11 “praying toward himself” (*pros heauton prosēucheto*). In prayer, stop all the self-talking. Do not turn inward like the Pharisee.

When you pray, turn outward to God. Make a turn in the direction to Yahweh and give Him your undivided attention.

Psalm 69:13 “As for me, my prayer is *to You, O YHWH.*”

Psalm 142:5 “I cry *to You, O YHWH.*”

The key point: Turn your full attention to Yahweh.

Point 2 – You YHWH

The focus of prayer is “You, Yahweh”. Your only concern is Yahweh. Stop thinking about “I”. Stop striving. Too many Christians are in a rush to unload their anxieties and problems on God as soon they start to pray. It is all “I”. The “I” makes us scattered. Forget the “I”. Change the “I” to “You” Yahweh. Set your mind on You, Yahweh.

Isaiah 63:16b “*You*, YHWH, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name”

Learn from the great men of God who fix their focus on You, YHWH.

Jeremiah 10:6 “There is none like *You*, O YHWH, you are great and your name is great in might.”

The key point: “Not I but YHWH”. Focus on YHWH.

Point 3 – Be still before YHWH

Be still and quiet your heart before God. Spending the needed time to quiet before God is often pushed aside in our fast-paced city life. We are always in a rush to get things done quickly. When we come before God, we need to slow down. Do not hurry. Make time to quiet down your heart before God in prayer.

Psalms 37:7 “Be still before YHWH.”

Stop talking. Let not your heart be troubled. The choice is yours. Don't allow your heart to make any noise.

Zephaniah 1:7a “Be silent before the Lord YHWH”

Be silent. Silence means a complete absence of sound. Turn off your phone and all digital devices so that there are no external disturbances when you come before God.

Always sit in the same place of silence where no one can disturb you. Create this solo space to call on Yahweh every day. Do not rush. Commit yourself to stillness.

Don't fall asleep. Open the window and breathe in some fresh air.

Zechariah 2:13a “Be silent, all flesh, before YHWH.”

The key point: Spend time to quiet your heart so that you can stay still before Yahweh.

Point 4 – Call YHWH and wait expectantly for YHWH

Psalms 40:1 “I waited patiently for YHWH; he inclined to me and heard my cry.”

This is your appointment with God. You are alone with Yahweh. In stillness of heart, call “O Yahweh” and wait expectantly for Yahweh.

The principle of waiting expectantly for Yahweh is easy to understand but hard to practice. Ponder on the analogy of you

calling someone by phone. When you dial the phone to get connected with the other person, you would *wait* for the person to pick up the phone before you start talking. It would be absurd to start talking to the person before he or she comes to the phone. But this is the sad situation of many Christians when they pray. They would ramble on without a care of whether God is there or not. They have no time to wait for God when they pray. Learn to wait patiently for Yahweh.

Call “O Yahweh”. Be very careful when you say the Name “Yahweh”.

Continue to be still. Call “O Yahweh” and wait with eager expectation for Yahweh.

Do not be in such a hurry. Surrender yourself to God and spend as much time as you need to wait for Yahweh.

Call “O Yahweh”. Listen attentively to the Name you are calling. Be still and with patience, wait expectantly for Yahweh.

Psalm 130:5 “I wait for YHWH, my soul waits and in his word I hope.”

The key point: Call Yahweh with special care and wait eagerly for Yahweh.

Point 5 – Seek God’s face

This is a sacred moment between you and God. You want to meet with Him. Seek His face.

Be very careful when you say the Name “Yahweh”. Let your heart be moved with love to call “O Yahweh”.

God desires that we seek His face. When we look intently at someone’s face, there is intimacy. We also get to know the character of the person directly.

Psalm 27:7-9a “Hear, O YHWH, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me! You have said, “Seek my face.” My heart says to you, “Your face, YHWH, do I seek.” Hide not your face from me.”

We cannot see God with our physical eyes, so how do we seek after the face of God? The Hebrew word for face is פָּנִים (*paniyim*). This word is often translated as “presence”.

Psalm 105:4 “Seek YHWH, and his strength; seek his *presence* (פָּנִים) continually!”

To seek the face of God is to seek His presence. In His presence, we find strength.

We are to seek the presence of God “continually”. The Hebrew word תָּמִיד (*tamid*) means “going on without interruption, continuity, continuously” (BDB). Seek God’s presence “always” (HCSB). Not only do we seek God’s presence during prayer time, but we also need to *stay in His presence* throughout the day. This is how we learn to pray without ceasing (1Thes 5:17).

2 Chronicles 7:14 “If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and *pray and seek my face* and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

God instructs His people to humble themselves to seek His face. In shepherding the church, I notice that Christians often turn away from God after they have sinned. They don't pray anymore. They don't go to church anymore. Like Adam, many Christians have a tendency to run away from God's presence because of the shame and guilt that resulted from their disobedience. God is asking, “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9). All the more, this is the crucial time to come before God. Do not hide your face from God, but come before His presence to repent with a contrite heart. Let God's face shine on you to restore you. This is how you experience God's salvation. Trust in Yahweh's forgiveness. This concept is so important that the Psalmist repeats it three times within one prayer.

Psalm 80:3 “Restore us, O God, let your face shine, that we may be saved!”

Psalm 80:7 “Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved!”

These are truly words of salvation when we experience God's face shining onto us.

Psalm 80:18-19 “Then we shall not turn back from you; give us life, and we will call upon your name! *Restore us, O YHWH God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved!*”

The key point: Call Yahweh with loving care so that you can be “in the moment” to sense the presence of Yahweh.

Point 6 – Engage your eyes on YHWH

You need to be very attentive with your eyes when you call on the name of Yahweh. Look to Yahweh and be fully present before Him. Oftentimes it is not that God is not there, but you are not there. Your eyes are not fixed on Yahweh. Look to Yahweh and let your eyes engage in what Yahweh is doing.

Psalm 123:1-2 “To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens! Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to YHWH our God, till he has mercy upon us.”

As the eyes of servants look, and as the eyes of a maidservant look, let your eyes look to Yahweh and be attentive to Yahweh.

You are not attentive because you have a short attention span. Your eyes are wandering away from Yahweh. You are not there with God. You are not single-minded on Yahweh as your eyes are distracted by other things. Suddenly you see the number of chores that need to get done. You are scattered. You become fidgety. A million thoughts race through your mind. There’s the special project, those blog posts, the

laundry, and the appointments for the day. Many things are pulling you in different directions. Your eyes are looking away from Yahweh and you are not there.

Tell the mind to stop. Keep Yahweh in the center of your focus. Train yourself to look continually with submission to Yahweh like a servant attending his master. For how long? Until Yahweh God shows his mercy on you (Ps 123:2). “Have mercy upon us, O YHWH, have mercy upon us” (v. 3). This means that you don’t demand an immediate answer from Yahweh. Learn to persevere patiently until Yahweh extends His mercy to you. Even if you feel great oppression from the enemy in their scorning, have complete confidence in God and look to Yahweh.

Wait as servants. Let your eyes be fully engaged on Yahweh. Notice that the psalmist uses the word “eyes” four times: “my eyes”, “the eyes of servants”, “the eyes of a maid servant”, “our eyes”. Take your eyes away from your suffering and “lift up your eyes” to Yahweh.

As servants look to “the hand of their master” and a maidservant looks to “the hand of her mistress”, you look to Yahweh. The hand directs. Pay close attention to Yahweh as any slight movement of His hand would be a signal for you to respond. Let your gaze be fixed attentively on Yahweh and His ways.

Psalm 25:15a “My eyes are ever toward YHWH.”

Look steadfastly on Yahweh. Keep looking. Keep waiting. This is how I train myself to be fully present when I call on His Name.

Imagine how frustrating it is to talk to a person whose eyes are rolling everywhere but are not fully concentrated before you. Stop all the things that distract your eyes. Only with focused attention on the other person can a meaningful relationship take place when we are in each other's company.

Psalm 141:8a “But my eyes are toward you, O YHWH, my Lord.”

The key point: Be attentive to Yahweh by engaging your eyes on what Lord Yahweh is doing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, true prayer is that we are not in charge: let go and let God take over. Like Joel, direct your mind and heart: “To you O Yahweh”. Focus on Yahweh. God has given His Name for you to focus on. Set a time in the morning to call on the Name of Yahweh. Commit yourself to this spiritual discipline over a period of time and see what happens. Schedule a consistent time to call on Yahweh as nothing happens automatically.

Grasp the important principles of addressing God's Name in prayer. As you call Yahweh, follow this procedure to help you stay focused on Yahweh as you call His Name:

1. To You O YHWH – Turn to Yahweh
2. You YHWH – Focus on Yahweh
3. Be still before YHWH
4. Call YHWH and wait expectantly for Yahweh
5. Seek God’s face – Be in the moment with Yahweh
6. Engage your eyes on YHWH – Be fully present before Yahweh

Yahweh desires to reveal Himself to you through His Name. It is in His Name that you see God’s glory and majesty. Through His Name, you will build a close relationship with God. You will be transformed to become more and more like God in His character. Just as Yahweh passed before Moses and proclaimed, “Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Ex 34:6-7), in the same way, God’s goodness will pass before you when you behold Him in prayer. In this same manner, Joel experiences the goodness of God, the One who is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love” (Joel 2:13).

Spare your people, O YHWH

Joel 2:17b “Spare your people, **O YHWH**, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’” (ESV, YHWH restored and boldface added)

Joel calls out to God and addresses God's name in prayer again, "O Yahweh". This is not a personal prayer but a desperate crying out to God for His intervention to save His people. God is looking for Christians to intercede, "Spare your people O Yahweh".

Things were not getting better in Joel's days. They thought the locust invasions were just a natural disaster and would soon go away. It is like the current thinking of people hoping that the Covid-19 pandemic will soon be over and life can get back to normal. Things will not get back to normal and will get worse.

"Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain" (2:1, 15). To sound the alarm with the trumpet is to wake up the people to warn them of impending danger. Joel already gave them a wake-up call in their locust plague crisis (1:5), but the people of God fell back into spiritual dormancy. Joel warned the people that the economic crisis was not over yet, but would escalate with the military invasion by an aggressive army (2:4-9). Greater destruction will be arriving with an army of rumbling horses and chariots charging for war. The warriors will march into the land, pounce upon the city, run upon walls, climb up into the houses and enter through the windows like a thief (2:7-9).

God is going to allow the armies to invade His own people to make them tremble. Even though the judgment seems as though God is against them, God is actually waking up His people. Understand God's heart and be on His side to gain victory. God wants to save His people. This is why Joel

intercedes, “Spare your people O YHWH.” It is not that Joel is more compassionate than God, but that he is beating after God’s heart. God is turning Joel into an intercessor so that he may think what God thinks and feel what God feels. God needs his leaders to turn the situation around for the nation.

Priest – Kohen in Hebrew

Joel is instructing the priests to intercede for God’s people. The Hebrew word for priest is *Kohen* or *Cohen*. The priests are called “ministers of Yahweh” (Joel 1:9; 2:17). A priest serves as a mediator between God and men. He acts as an ambassador for God, to represent God on His behalf to the people. He also acts on behalf of the people to bring their worship and sacrifices to God.

Joel interceded for the people. Joel could not do this alone, so he instructed the priests to join him to mourn and weep in front of the altar. The priests need to cry out to God on behalf of His people. Priests, first and foremost, minister by interceding for God’s people. The goal is to bring everyone to a right relationship with God. Let the ministers of YHWH weep and say, “Spare your people O YHWH” (2:17).

God is looking for intercessors

God is looking for intercessors in each generation. Let the Spirit of God move us to intercede for His people. Mourn for God’s people so that they do not discredit God’s Name and reputation and become a reproach among the nations (2:17,

19). Oftentimes in our church, people make mistakes due to weaknesses and lack of alertness. The church becomes the target of Satan. Spiritual attacks come from all sides to knock us down. This is the time I most need to pray through to plead for God's mercy on our church. God intervenes. He spares us.

Moses was a great intercessor who interceded for the rebellious Israelites and pleaded with God not to wipe them out (Ex 32:9-14). Moses could not sit back and do nothing, and allow the Israelites to perish under the judgment of God. We too must follow the same. As a result of Moses' intercession, "Yahweh relented" from the calamity that He had intended to bring upon the Israelites (v.14). Even though Moses did not sin, he identified himself so much with the Israelites that he even asked God to blot his name out of God's book should there be no forgiveness for the Israelites (v.32). The intercession of Moses resulted in Israel receiving God's mercy rather than judgment.

Be an intercessor

Every family needs intercessors. Every church needs intercessors. Are you an intercessor?

Leaders need to be intercessors. We often intercede for our people in the church. Every night, I count my sheep to make sure that they are safe in the pen but sometimes not all return. When a sheep is lost, we need to search for the lost sheep until we find it (Lk 17:4). I recall an incident when a member of our church went astray and had fallen deeply into sin. It took many hours of counseling and prayers for the person to pull

through to overcome sins. When a member sins, the entire body of Christ suffers. Through travailing and agonizing for the person, I learn to feel God's sorrow and be compassionate like God. In God's mercy, He turned His wrath away from the person. "Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." (Jer 9:1)

Be a person who beats after God's own heart. Feel the heart of God. As we call on Yahweh on behalf of His people, we become more like our Creator. The longer I serve in the church, the more I realize that our calling on the name of Yahweh is not a personal matter at all. We call on Yahweh with a complete concern for His people. Let God's concern be our concern.

"There is no one"

Yahweh is looking for intercessors to take hold of Him, but the stark reality is that "there is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you" (Isa 64:7). How sad. There is no one who calls on Yahweh. Why? No one is willing to rouse himself to take hold of Yahweh. The Hebrew word for rouse is עורר (*ur*), which means "to awake, to stir up to activity" (BDB). The people of God have dozed off into a deep sleep and sunk into spiritual atrophy.

Who is willing *to arise* from spiritual slumber and call on Yahweh? Like the people in Joel's time, the church today is sound asleep. While the outward performances of churches look promising, the inner life has gone into spiritual decay. It

is said of the church of Sardis: “I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. *Wake up*, and strengthen what remains and is about to die.” (Rev 3:1-2) It requires great effort to come out from a deep spiritual sleep. Do you have the strength to take hold of God for His people?

God is looking for intercessors to call on Him but there is no one. Thus says Yahweh: “Why was no one there when I came? Why was there no one to answer when I called?” (Isa 50:2) These are chilling words.

God says to Ezekiel, “I searched for a man among them who would repair the wall and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land so that I might not destroy it, but I found no one” (Ezek 22:30). This is truly heartbreaking. God searched and found no one. Today, God is still desperately searching for a man to stand in the gap for this generation. Will you come out and stand in the gap?

Joel stood in the gap

Joel was a prophet who stood in the gap. God found him and used him mightily in the middle of a national crisis. Joel had faith in God regarding the salvation of Judah and so he called out to Yahweh on behalf of the people. Yahweh answered him. Calling out to God to spare His people is a plea for mercy.

Joel was a prophet with a heart of a true pastor. Joel didn't just intercede once but lived a life of intercession calling on Yahweh. Our intercession counts. “Who knows? Perhaps God will turn and relent” (Joel 2:14). Yes, intercession can move God's heart. When Joel and the priests interceded, the heart

of our Sovereign God was moved. Even children, nursing infants, bride and bridegroom left their chambers to join in the intercession (v.16). No personal affairs were more important than to plead together for God’s mercy. God relented from the extreme judgment and said, “I will no more make you a reproach among the nations” (v.19). Intercession can make a difference. Joel turned the people around to return to God and restored them to faith in Yahweh.

Joel was addressing the national crisis of his time and interceded for God’s people. What about our situation today? How can we follow the example of Joel to intercede for our generation? We are living in an unprecedented time in history. The Covid-19 crisis is sweeping across the world and disrupting everyone’s lives globally. Covid-19 is a wake-up call from God. Not only do we wake up, but more importantly, we “keep awake” (Mk 13:33) and “stay awake” (v.35). Jesus did not just say these words to his disciples, but “what I say to you I say to *all*: stay awake” (v.37). Wake up, keep awake and stay awake lest when Jesus returns, he “finds you asleep” (v.36). Covid-19 has put an urgency in my heart to preach the Gospel ever more intensely because time is running out. We learned a precious lesson back in 2003 when SARS hit Hong Kong. Our church woke up to respond to God with a sense of great urgency in the sudden outbreak of SARS in our community. Although people were anxious and fearful of the increasing numbers of deaths each day, newcomers kept coming to our church week after week. There were no social distancing stipulations, but contracting SARS leading to death

was real. However, this did not stop the people from coming to our church. More and more young people came hungering for God's Word. Eventually, our church could not accommodate everyone and needed to branch out to start a new congregation in another district.

But now, 17 years later with the onslaught of Covid-19, I see a different picture of response from Christians. Christians are not waking up. Many suffer from pandemic fatigue in this prolonged crisis. Christians are falling into a state of despondency and conforming to the world rather than crying out to God with the urgency to do His will. Instead of waking up, many are hitting the snooze button waiting for the crisis to go away soon. What if Covid-19 never ends?

The coronavirus pandemic is a sign pointing to the beginning of birth pangs of troubles that are coming in the end times. Labor pain is not a steady pain but repeated pains occurring one after another. Know that the hour of travail occurs in a process of time and we are only at the beginning. We need to accept the anguish of pain that has been brought onto us in this pandemic, to be strengthened to triumph over the next wave that is more severe ahead of us. The Omicron variant is less deadly but spreads more easily. What if the virus mutates into something even more dangerous and life-threatening? Once the birth pang begins, we can expect recurring pains to occur more frequently and with greater intensity. So, let us not complain about wearing masks and being put under restrictions. Persecutions have not even started yet. Our focus is to "get ready" for the imminent day of the Lord.

Christians from different parts of the world have been contacting us to say that they long to have all these restrictions lifted from them so that they can travel again, move on with the comfortable life of eating and do social networking. They want to return to the normal life of pre-Covid-19. But can we? Even if we could, should we? That is the question we need to ask ourselves before Almighty God. Business cannot be as usual. Covid-19 is not just another crisis to get through. This is the hour that God is awakening the Christians to get trained in preparation for the end times. Are you among the wise preparing the extra oil (Mt 25:1-13)? The wise are prepared because they live with anticipation of a crisis of delay in the coming of the bridegroom. The bridegroom is tarrying. Do you have the extra oil? The fools take things for granted thinking that everything is normal and as usual. It is time to put away the usual human way of thinking and be transformed by the renewal of the mind to see Covid-19 through God's lens. Have mercy on your people O YHWH. Open our blind eyes. Open our deaf ears. Let us not conform to the world but live with an awakening love to do your will. Forgive our hypocrisy and despondency. We have forsaken our first love. We repent from the sin of lukewarmness. Our love of comfort has lured us into compromising with the world. We are caught in Satan's snares unaware. We have become materialistic, self-satisfied and lazy. Free us from the bondage of double-mindedness which has led to unbelief. We are prone to quitting. You take no pleasure in those who shrink back. Forgive us for looking back after having put our hands on the

plough. Soften our hardened hearts O YHWH. We humble ourselves before you in wholeheartedness and with a renewed urgency to do your will. Let us be single-minded to think your thoughts and walk in your ways. Let us stay awake and call your Name. Time is running out fast. Let us arise and be on fire to get the Church and everyone ready for the end times.

Will you call on God to spare His people? Will you be a Joel for this generation?

Bring down your warriors, O YHWH

Joel 3:11b “Bring down your warriors, O YHWH”.

Joel chapter 3 speaks of battle scenes where God vindicates His people. The time has come for God to judge the nations for oppressing Israel. In the midst of battle, Joel calls on the name of Yahweh for victory.

The nations are in rebellion against God. God is taunting the nations to march into the valley of Jehoshaphat for battle (Joel 3:12). Joel compels everyone to gather for war. “Let all the men of war draw near” (v.9). Advance and attack. “Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears” (v.10). Even the farmers have to stop farming and fight by turning their farming equipment into weapons. Everyone goes to war. The weak ones are also compelled to fight. Joel hastens all the surrounding nations to gather for war. In the heat of battle, Joel suddenly calls out to God, “Bring down your warriors, O Yahweh” (v.11). And Yahweh

answers him. The enemies are completely destroyed. Joel is a man of prayer. He is so connected to God all the time that when he calls on Yahweh, Yahweh answers.

Joel chapter 3 is prophetic regarding the gathering of the nations for the final battle in the end times. The name Jehoshaphat means “Yahweh judges”. Jehoshaphat was the fourth king of Judah. God gave him victory over the Moabites, Ammonites and Meunites when they united their armies to fight against Jerusalem (2Chr 20:1-30). Prophetically speaking, the valley of Jehoshaphat is the “valley of decision” (repeated twice in v.14) where God will make a decisive act of judgment to end the final battle for Jerusalem.

Today, we fight spiritual battles for God in our churches.

In shepherding the church, we often need to face the hostility of God’s enemies. We can only call out to Yahweh to intervene to fight for us. There are enemies all around us but we need not fear, because Yahweh is a warrior (Ex 15:3) and mighty in battle (Ps 24:8). The most difficult enemies to fight are those who oppose us from within the church. Watch out for the Judases. The enemies, whether outside or inside, will fight against us, but they will stumble and not overcome, because Yahweh is our dread warrior (Jer 20:11). There is absolutely no fear of the enemies in the presence of God. Before Yahweh, our persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will fall and be thoroughly disgraced.

Call on the name of Yahweh for victory! His enemies will be defeated and judged.

In the final battle in Jerusalem, God will bring in the final redemption for His people on that Day. “The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to Yahweh” (Prov 21:31).

Call

God desires that we call on His Name. This invitation is open to everyone, but only a few will respond. Many are called but few are chosen (Mt 22:14).

Joel 2:32 “Everyone who **calls** on the name of YHWH shall be saved.” (ESV, YHWH restored and boldface added)

The word “call” in Hebrew is קָרָא (*qara*). This verb in the Qal imperfect tense indicates that the action is incomplete; usually the verb is translated either as a present or a future tense. The action of calling is not a one-time event, but a continual calling on Yahweh.

Qara in Hebrew means “call, utter a loud sound, cry for help, or proclaim” (BDB). The calling is not silent but loud enough to be heard. Praying can be silent but calling must be audible.

Call aloud

Most of us pray in our hearts. We are accustomed to silent prayers. Do you pray aloud? We pray out loud when we give thanks before meals or in prayer meetings. What about when

you are alone at home, do you pray aloud? Calling on the Name of Yahweh needs to be expressed audibly. Come before God with a pure heart and pray aloud. There is no need to shout but let your voice be heard before God.

We sing with our voices. Music is to be heard and never silent. Waiting on God needs to be silent but calling to God needs to be expressed audibly. “I cry *aloud* with my *voice* to Yahweh; I make supplication with *my voice* to Yahweh.” (Ps 142:1) Acquire the habit of praying out loud when you are alone and let your voice be heard before Yahweh. “Hear O YHWH, when I cry *aloud*” and Yahweh answers (Ps 27:7).

The same Hebrew word for “call” is sometimes translated as “cry”. To cry out to God involves the whole heart, “With my *whole heart* I cry; answer me, O YHWH!” (Ps 119:145). Whenever we come to God in prayer, do not stand aloof, but let your whole being be involved in the calling of Yahweh. Cry out from a pure heart and call “Yahweh”.

When I cry out to Yahweh, I also learn to fear the Name of Yahweh. Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with *loud cries* and *tears* to God and he was heard because of his reverence to God (Heb 5:7). From the depths of your heart, cry out to Yahweh with deep reverence. Yahweh listens. Engage your heart to cry out with deep earnestness to God. David often cries aloud to Yahweh and Yahweh answers him from His holy hill (Ps 3:4).

Call the Name of YHWH with reverence

When you call the Name “Yahweh”, you need to say the Name with care and reverence. Open your heart and your whole being to Yahweh before you even say the Name. Come before Yahweh from the depths of your being before you call the Name.

Begin by whispering the Name from your heart. Open your mouth and whisper the Name “Yahweh”. Do not shout. Begin by whispering His Holy Name.

Slowly say the Name. There is no need to rush. Take time to call the Name with gentle and loving care.

As we stand before the Holy God, we become aware of our ungodliness. This is the time I cry out to plead for God’s mercy and forgiveness. Sins block our way to God. God does not listen to our prayers if we hide sins in our hearts. “I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer.” (Ps 66:17-19) God will hide His face from us when we have wicked deeds. “Then they will cry to Yahweh, but he will not answer them; he will hide his face from them at that time, because they have made their deeds evil” (Micah 3:4). Repent of your sins and seek for God’s forgiveness. This is how you call Yahweh with a pure heart. Yahweh listens.

Every morning, I learn to sit quietly before God for a set period of time to call His Name. I don’t go into deep meditation or think of what words to say. There is no need to

analyze anything. There are no special techniques involved. I spend time to prepare my heart to focus on Yahweh. In the stillness of heart, I call on the name of Yahweh. A burning desire and hunger for God is all that is needed in the calling of the Name. Shut the door, be alone and call His Name, “O YHWH”.

The Name of Yahweh is our single focus. There is no other agenda in the calling of Yahweh. No prayer request. No prayer items. Call the Name “Yahweh”. Let Yahweh lead. Yahweh does His work in our lives and we get strengthened as He transforms us to be more like Him from day to day. “I call to you all day long” and “O YHWH, unite my heart to fear your Name” (Ps 86:3, 11).

Call on the Name of YHWH in public worship

On other occasions, we call on the name of Yahweh to proclaim His holy Name publicly so that people may come to know that Yahweh is God. In the event of Mount Carmel, Elijah called on Yahweh and Yahweh answered him. “O YHWH, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O YHWH, answer me, that this people may know that you, O YHWH, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back” (1Ki 18:36-37).

Elijah was a man of faith. He called on Yahweh and proclaimed Yahweh as the one true God. Yahweh answered him and fire came down to consume the burnt offering. In

response, the people fell on their faces and said, “YHWH, he is God; YHWH, he is God” (v.39). Interestingly, the Hebrew name “Elijah” means “Yahweh is God”.

In our Sunday worship services, I call on Yahweh and proclaim His Name to lead the congregation to worship the only true God, YHWH.

Call on YHWH with all your heart

Joel lived in a time of national crisis. Nothing like this in history had ever happened before in their days or in the days of their fathers (Joel 1:2). “Hear this, you elders; give ear, all inhabitants of the land!” Pay close attention to Joel. The message is so significant that the people were instructed to “tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation” (v.3). The message of Joel is not to be forgotten but to be passed down from one generation to the next. We need to grasp the message of the book of Joel so thoroughly that we can tell our children about it, so that they too can pass on the message to their children. The book of Joel is relevant to our generation.

We need to understand our time. We are living in a very significant hour that is unique in human history. Today, the world is stricken with the terror of disasters, earthquakes, wars, fighting, persecutions, hunger, famine, climate crisis, terrorist attacks, and pandemics. From the Covid-19 that has

been spreading globally, sufferings and disasters are increasing worldwide. In the past few years, we have been experiencing unusual weather patterns around the world. Snow is falling on the Sahara Desert. Not to mention rainfall increasing in the Arctic region. Extreme weather that is damaging crops is triggering spikes in the prices of agricultural commodities. When the food chain collapses, the food shortages will be the prelude to worldwide famine. More people will die from famine than from the Covid-19 pandemic. There will be huge breakouts of wars. All these signs are paving the way of the end times. The world is on the edge of collapse. Rumors of wars, famines, and increasing frequency of earthquakes are the beginning of birth pangs leading to the end of this age (Mt 24:3; 7-8).

Our present crises, be it political, social, financial, economic, climatic, or environmental, are escalating in intensity that requires a response like that of Joel. Our time is no different from the time of Joel. The prophetic message of Joel is most relevant to our generation as we are nearer to the Day of YHWH. People of God need to wake up to call on the name of Yahweh. As we call on Yahweh, we gather our children to call on Yahweh together, so that in their turn, they will pass on the life of calling on Yahweh to their children.

Wake up! Weep, mourn, and lament

Joel 1:5a “**Awake**, you drunkards, and **weep**, and **wail**.” (ESV, boldface added)

Let's wake up! Calling on YHWH involves weeping, mourning and lamenting from the heart. Joel chapter 1 speaks of the locust plague and its devastating results on the land. Locusts are ravenous eaters. "What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten" (1:4). The destruction was catastrophic as the locusts moved in four stages of successive swarms, destroying all the crops. It is similar to what we are experiencing in the Covid-19 pandemic that is coming onto us wave after wave, with each increasing in greater intensity. In the four successive waves of locust invasion, farmers lost their harvest year after year. A locust plague can last for a few years, just as the coronavirus pandemic could last for a few years.

Joel 1:8 "**Lament** like a virgin wearing sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth. (ESV, boldface added)

Calling the Name of Yahweh is not a mere uttering of God's Name, but a deep plea of a repentant heart filled with lament, like that of a young bride wearing sackcloth who mourns for the death of her bridegroom. It is unthinkable that a bride would be wearing a sackcloth on her wedding day. When joy turns to deep sorrow, the agony of bereavement would be too unbearable. One can only wail and weep in grief. It is with this level of lamentation from the heart that Joel calls out to Yahweh to save the Israelites from their desperate plight.

As if the crisis of the swarming locusts were not enough, the crisis mounted when the drought came.

Joel 1:11-12 “Be ashamed, O tillers of the soil; **wail**, O vine-dressers, for the wheat and the barley, because the harvest of the field has perished. The vine dries up; the fig tree languishes. Pomegranate, palm, and apple, all the trees of the field are dried up, and gladness dries up from the children of man.” (ESV, boldface added)

With the coming of the drought, the fields were ruined and the ground dried up. The wheat and barley were totally destroyed. The fig trees languished, and the vine, pomegranate, and apples all shriveled. All the trees in the field withered away. The food is cut off (v.16). Can you feel their desperate situation?

As if the drought crisis that came with the scorching heat were not enough, a devastating fire came and burnt up all the trees of the field (v.19) and destroyed the pastures of the wilderness (v.19, 20). The crisis was not going away but increased with intensity. It was one crisis after another.

God’s judgment came, yet His people were still asleep and drunk in their pitiful spiritual state. It is time to wake up, repent and put on sackcloth to cry out to God for mercy. Weep, wail, mourn and lament.

Joel is telling the people to get in touch with reality and lament like the lamenting virgin. Wake up and weep. This is a wake-up call for us too. You cannot weep without feeling painful in the heart. The unexpected Covid-19 crisis that has

plunged into our lives worldwide is not by accident. Business is not as usual. Life cannot be the same again. We cannot get back to the life before Covid-19. We need to be willing to change. Call on Yahweh to understand our times. Covid-19 caught the attention of everyone on a worldwide scale such that all the countries are affected by the same disaster. No one can stay aloof. More headline news of further upcoming disasters will be on the global level from now on. Call on the name of Yahweh. Lament and mourn.

Let us be broken and pray with deep mourning to weep over our sins. Call for God's mercy to come upon us.

Cry out to YHWH

Joel 1:13-14 “Put on sackcloth and *lament*, O priests; **wail**, O ministers of the altar. Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God! Because grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of YHWH your God, **cry out to YHWH.**” (ESV, YHWH restored and boldface added)

The Hebrew word for “cry out” is קָרָא (zaaq), which means “to call, to cry out in need” (BDB). It is difficult to cry out to Yahweh if one does not feel the need in the heart. Sin makes our hearts callous such that we become indifferent and unresponsive even in our desperate situation.

Joel exhorted the priests to gather the elders to call on Yahweh together in their great distress. Was Joel a priest? We

cannot tell as the only identifying background is the mentioning of his father's name. Was Pethuel a priest? No extra information is given about Pethuel either.

From the internal evidence, Joel probably lived in the environs of Jerusalem and was familiar with the temple worship. He was concerned that the grain offerings and drink offerings had been cut off from the house of Yahweh. Without wine and grain, the people of God were not able to offer anything to Yahweh. Their worship to God was disrupted and stopped. This whole matter cut into Joel's heart deeply.

Joel told the priests to put on sackcloth to wail and weep in front of the altar. Sleeping and eating were not important anymore. Like the lamenting virgin, they were to weep through the night (v.13). They were to call a solemn assembly to gather all the elders and the inhabitants to cry out to Yahweh together. A joint effort of corporate calling in the house of YHWH was necessary for them to break through spiritually. Calling for a fast to cry out to Yahweh together was surely a most appropriate move at this time of crisis after crisis.

Return to YHWH with all your heart

Joel 2:12-13 “Yet even now,” declares YHWH, “**return to me with all your heart**, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend *your hearts* and not your garments.” **Return to YHWH** your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.” (ESV, YHWH restored and boldface added)

God is a wholehearted God for He loves us with all His heart. In this covenantal relationship, it is only right that we also love Him with all our hearts. The people of God in Joel's time turned away from Yahweh and needed to get back into a right relationship with God.

Returning to Yahweh must begin from the heart. Indeed God searches our hearts. Putting on sackcloth and rending the garment are pointless if a heart of repentance is not there. God will be gracious and merciful to us if we return to Him with *all* our hearts.

(1) Open your heart to Yahweh God and repent. Draw near to Yahweh with complete openness of heart and let God come close to you. Any resistance on your part will close the channel for God to cleanse you thoroughly from within. When you have sins in your heart, you need to repent and return to God.

(2) Yield your heart completely to God. Give your whole heart to God and do not hold back. Many Christians are afraid of God getting too close as they don't want Him to touch their hearts. I watch them with sadness when I see their hearts hardening towards God. Their hearts grow cold and they become lukewarm. The fire of God is no longer there. Surrender everything in your heart to God.

In my early Christian days, maintaining a daily devotion time with God was a daunting task. I would be in such a rush to do my daily activities that I did not make time for God. I

had difficulty getting up early in the morning to spend time with God. I was lazy. As a result, my spiritual life was dry and stagnant with no burning fire for God. Many times I would kneel before God to ask for His forgiveness for not returning to Him with all my heart. We need to be zealous in our repentance. When Bible reading becomes stale and prayer is feeble, return to Yahweh with all your heart. Let Him turn all your restlessness into restfulness in Him.

Call to Yahweh from the depths of your heart to return to Him. The calling is not done in a mechanical way. Neither do you use the Name of Yahweh as a formula. Do not “mouth” His Name, or pay lip service to God. Call “Yahweh” from your heart to deliver you.

In the 6th full-time training conducted by Pastor Eric in 1994, he taught us how to call on the name of Yahweh. It was the first time I had learned to call on Yahweh in prayer. I began the process of learning to call on Yahweh with all my heart. “With my whole heart I cry; answer me O Yahweh!” (Ps 119:145) When I call on God’s Name, I feel His pleasure. Yahweh takes pleasure in those who fear him (Ps 147:11). When I watch myself and others calling out to Yahweh from the depths of the heart, there is a deep stirring in our souls to take hold of God. It is a moment of inner awakening. You will know it yourself when the calling is from the heart. You are strengthened when you call on God’s trusted Name. He always hears this kind of prayer. Yahweh God takes pleasure

in His people and adorns the humble with salvation (Ps 149:4).

Call on YHWH for the Day is Near

Joel speaks of a significant day: the day of YHWH יוֹם יְהוָה. The calamity of the locusts in chapter 1 and the invading army in chapter 2 foreshadow a greater devastating judgment to come in chapter 3. The day of Yahweh is a day of judgment for the disobedient but also a day of salvation to those who trust Him.

Joel describes the day of Yahweh as “a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Joel 2:2).

Joel 2:11 “And YHWH utters his voice before his army, because his encampment is very large; strong is the one who carries out his decree, for great is **the day of Yahweh** and exceedingly fearful. Who can endure it?” (LEB, boldface added)

The calamities will be so dreadful that the suffering will be beyond description. It will surely be a great and terrible day, who can endure it? We must get ready for that day for it will surely come. There will be unusual cosmological signs to signal the day of Yahweh.

Joel 2:31 “The sun will be changed to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the coming of the great and awesome **day of Yahweh.**” (LEB, boldface added)

We often think that the day of Yahweh is very far away from us. But Joel tells us that not only is the day of Yahweh coming, it is near.

Joel 1:15 “Ah! For the day! For **the day of Yahweh is near**. It will come like destruction from Shaddai.” (LEB, boldface added)

Joel 2:1 “Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for **the day of Yahweh is coming** — it is indeed **near**.” (LEB, boldface added)

Joel 3:14 “Commotion, commotion in the valley of decision! For **the day of Yahweh is near** in the valley of decision!” (LEB, boldface added)

Each disaster that is happening in our world is bringing the day of Yahweh nearer and nearer. The Hebrew word for “near” is קָרוֹב (*qarob*), which means “near in place or time” (BDB). The day of Yahweh is indeed imminent; therefore the wake-up call to spiritual alertness demands an *immediate* response. Do not procrastinate any longer but get yourself spiritually ready for that day. Call on Yahweh.

The nearness of the Day of YHWH

How often do you ponder on the day of Yahweh? I often meditate on the day of Yahweh as we are moving ever closer to that day.

Let's call on the name of Yahweh, for God's judgment has come. The Covid-19 pandemic has turned the world upside down since 2020. The music stopped. 2.3 million people died from the virus in one year. We globally were forced to stop in our tracks altogether. Much of our lives came to a halt with city lockdowns and social distancing. But even long before Covid-19, many of our lives had already been in effectual lockdown, and the coronavirus outbreak simply brought our pitiful situation to the surface. Already in the past decade, have you noticed that with smartphones and social media, sitting together with friends and family has ironically become less sociable, with people disengaged from one another in self absorption in their phones? People don't have time to engage in meaningful conversation anymore. Even at the dinner table, everyone is busy with their phones and not talking to each other. Conversations have turned to quick and short messages. We seem to be more efficient, but we have become more isolated and self-centered. Loneliness, fear, anxiety, stress, and depression have started controlling many lives. Has Covid-19 wakened us up to put our lives in order before God? All the more, this is the time we need to call on the name of Yahweh.

The judgment of the locust invasion in Joel has parallels—whether physical or spiritual—in modern times. While everyone's attention has been focused on combating the coronavirus, many may not be aware of the locust swarms migrating across Africa, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, India, and southwest China, destroying crops. We are living in critical days of

the end times. Pandemic, locusts, plague, drought and famine are signs of the end times (cf. Lk 21:11).

Just as the locust plague and the famine in Joel foreshadow a far greater and devastating judgment to come, we are now living in the *shadow* of the nearness of the day. Are we prepared for famine when it comes our way? It may just be around the corner. Could it be that from now on, wearing face masks is a necessity of life until the day of Yahweh? That day does not suddenly come without signs and warnings. Each sign ought to prompt us to repent speedily in preparing for the coming Kingdom.

Other prophets also speak of the Day of YHWH

One of the prominent themes of the OT prophets is the day of Yahweh. The OT prophets prophesied concerning their times, but their prophecies speak prophetically of the end times in which we are living today.

1. The day of Yahweh is also called “that day” (Isa 2:11) or “the great day” (Zeph 1:14a).
2. The day of Yahweh is near, a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations (Ezek 30:3).
3. The day of Yahweh is darkness and gloom with no light and brightness (Amos 5:18, 20).
4. The great day of Yahweh is a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick

darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and lofty battlements (Zeph 1:14-16).

In a nutshell, the day of Yahweh is a great and dreadful day (Mal 4:5). It is a terrible day of wrath, who can withstand it? (Rev 6:17)

As the day of Yahweh is yet to come, we now wait for its eschatological arrival. The end times will be dreadful. Who can endure the intense crisis? The day of Yahweh is great yet terrible—great for the remnant as they will experience salvation, and terrible for the wicked as they will be punished in judgment.

Promise of Salvation from YHWH

The promise of salvation comes in the form of blessings from Yahweh. The blessings that God pours out are twofold: earthly physical abundance (Joel 2:18-27) and spiritual empowering (2:28-32). Signs and wonders will follow in the heavens and the earth.

Physical Blessings: God will *pour* down abundant rain to bless His people and the land.

Joel 2:23 “Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in YHWH your God, for he has given the *early rain* for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the *early* and the *latter rain*, as before.”(ESV, YHWH restored and italics added)

Physical blessings will come upon the land. Abundant rain will come to nurture the crops. In the agricultural world, the farmers depend on the autumn rain (early rain) and the spring rain (latter rain) for a full harvest. God promises to give the early and the latter rain. The threshing floor will be full of grain, and the vats will overflow with wine and oil (v.24). The wilderness will turn into green pastures; trees will bear fruit; and the vine and the fig tree will give their full yield. God's people will eat in plenty and be satisfied (v.26).

Spiritual Blessings: Afterwards, God will bless His people spiritually by *pouring* out His Spirit. Twice, God says "I will pour out my Spirit". The word "pour" denotes God's great generosity in the giving of His Spirit. The outpouring of the Spirit is a sign of God's salvation to His people.

Joel 2:28-29 "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will *pour* out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will *pour* out my Spirit." (ESV, italics added)

Joel is revealing a prophecy that is unheard of in his time regarding the Spirit. All along, the Spirit came upon kings, priests, and prophets. Only men with special offices received the anointing of the Spirit. But now, the Spirit is no longer limited to certain individuals but will be made available to *everyone* who calls on Him. All gender, age and social barriers will be removed. Spiritual blessings will come abundantly

upon *all* flesh—sons and daughters, the old and the young; even male and female servants will be included. This prophecy would have been mind blowing to those who heard it in the days of Joel.

Prophecies are fulfilled in progressive stages

The prophecies in the Old Testament are fulfilled in progressive stages. Some parts have been partially fulfilled, some are being fulfilled, and some will be completely fulfilled in the age to come. The initial fulfillment began at Pentecost when the Spirit was poured out onto the disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-4). Such mighty activities of the Spirit will complete its fulfillment at the end of this age when “the Gospel of the Kingdom” is proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations (Mt 24:14a). There will be a final harvest in bringing the Gospel to all nations. The latter rain will ripen the crop right before the harvest. Spiritually speaking, we are at the end of the latter rain, and the crops will come to full maturity, ripe and ready for harvesting. “And then the end will come” (Mt 24:14b). This will mark the end of this present age. Christ (the Messiah) who is seated on the cloud will return to the earth with his sharp sickle, “for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe” (Rev 14:14-15). Time is running out. Christ will soon put in the sickle to end this age and bring in the age to come.

On the other hand, an angel will swing his sickle and gather the grape harvest and throw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God (Rev 14:19). This is in line with the end-time

prophecy in Joel 3:13, “Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the winepress is full. The vats overflow, for their evil is great.” Joel is prophetically speaking about the future when the measure of wickedness reaches its height. At that time, God’s long-suffering will no longer avail. Judgment comes. God’s full wrath will come upon the wicked. At the end of the age, there will be a separation between the righteous and the wicked (Mt 13:49).

It is like the days of Noah: as soon as God shut the door of the ark, the flood came (Gen 7:16). The ark is the symbol of the Church. We are now living at the same edge of time. Before the age of the Church closes, we still have the remaining little time to spread “the Gospel of the Kingdom” to all nations (Mt 24:14). Let us go forward in the empowering of the Spirit to save souls and bring in the final harvest for God’s Kingdom.

Signs and wonders

Joel 2:30-31 “And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The *sun* shall be turned to darkness, and the *moon* to blood, *before* the great and awesome day of YHWH comes.” (ESV, YHWH restored, italics added)

The unusual cosmological signs point to the final phase of the end times right before the coming of the Messiah.

Jesus in the New Testament also warned the disciples of similar dramatic changes in the sun, moon and stars at his coming.

Matthew 24:29-30 “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the *sun* will be darkened, and the *moon* will not give its light, and the *stars* will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven *the sign of the Son of Man*, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the *Son of Man* coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (ESV, italics added)

The coming of the son of man will be a glorious day. The God of Israel will manifest His glory openly for everyone to see as the Messiah comes on the clouds of heaven. The Messiah will usher in the new age to deliver His people.

The sequence of progressive events

The prophecies of Joel 2:28-31 point to a long span of time. We are now looking at Joel’s prophecies that were written about 2600+ years ago. The outpouring of the Spirit began its fulfillment at Pentecost 2000+ years ago and will have its complete fulfillment at the end of the age.

There is a sequence of progressive events in the prophecy:

1. The pouring of the Spirit has begun at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-18)
2. The Spirit has been poured onto the Jews and Gentiles (Acts 2:1-13; Acts 10:34-46)
3. The Church is empowered with God's Spirit
4. Further empowering of the Spirit brings the Gospel to all nations for the final harvest
5. Signs and wonders take place in heaven and on earth
6. The son of man comes to earth on the clouds of heaven

The Remnant

Joel 2:32 “And it shall come to pass that everyone *who calls on the name of YHWH shall be saved*. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as YHWH has said, and among the survivors shall be *those whom YHWH calls*.” (ESV, YHWH restored and italics added)

Let's consider the two parts of this verse and see how they are linked together:

- (1) Everyone who calls on the name of YHWH
- (2) The remnant whom YHWH calls

Everyone who calls on the name of YHWH

Joel 2:32a “And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of YHWH shall be saved.”

This is a call to come to YHWH. The invitation to call on the name of YHWH is open to everyone. However, not everyone will respond. Will you respond? Only those who call on the name of YHWH will experience salvation.

Joel is also prophetically pointing to a *future* event that will take place in the *final* phase of salvation for mankind.

The day of Yahweh will be impossible to endure without God’s mercy. To the wicked it will be a terrible day. To the righteous who call on the Name of Yahweh, they *will be saved*. “The name of Yahweh is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe” (Prov 18:10).

In turbulent times, Yahweh gives strength and peace to those who call on Him. Bear in mind that those who call on Yahweh are not merely crying out to God to escape from the destruction but expressing their faith in total reliance on Yahweh, the One in whom they take refuge. They trust in Yahweh as their God, and He delivers them. Call on Yahweh when you are in danger. More importantly, nurture a life of calling on the name of Yahweh every day. If you do not have the spiritual discipline of daily calling on Yahweh, how will you call on Yahweh in that critical hour of the day?

Call on Yahweh now in the Covid-19 crisis. Covid-19 caught us unprepared to face the end times. The end times is right at our doorstep. God is telling us that perilous times are

here, at least for a season, so that we still have time to freely preach the Gospel. Global persecutions will begin, but God's people are not prepared. You must "be prepared" because the "Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Mt 24:44). With the Omicron being a less severe variant of Covid-19, I see God extending a season of grace for us to prepare ourselves for more difficult days ahead of us. This is the time to toughen up physically and spiritually to face the harsh realities of the end times crises. Brace yourself for famine and outbreak of wars. When Russia invaded Ukraine early this year in 2022, it was an escalation of the Russia-Ukraine war that took place in 2014. Will this war spiral into a global warfare among the nations? When you hear of wars and rumours of war, you know that the great tribulation is here. Such things must happen, "but the end is not yet" (Mt 24:6). Now that we are still living in a relatively peaceful time, call on the name of Yahweh to equip us spiritually for worse days ahead. Under the great persecution of the antichrist, he will throw us into prison and even kill us. Have you noticed that the Covid-19 pandemic is quickly turning the world into a cashless society? For hygiene purposes, we have gotten used to using the convenience of mobile payment transactions. While people are saying, "There is peace and security", then suddenly destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. (1Thes 5:3). One day, people cannot buy or sell without the mark of the beast (Rev 13:16-17). A time of deep darkness is coming. Get ready

and prepare yourself for extreme suffering. Sudden destruction will come upon the whole world when we least expect it. Call on Yahweh for extra grace to endure all persecutions, so that we may be counted on to bring the Gospel to all nations before the end comes (Mt 24:14).

Trust fully in Yahweh today as you live under the authority of Yahweh to call His Name in these end times.

The Remnant whom YHWH calls

Joel 2:32b “Among the survivors shall be those whom YHWH calls.”

The Hebrew word for survivor is סָרִיד (*sarid*), which carries the meaning of “remnant, the remaining, that which is left” (TWOT). There is a remnant whom Yahweh calls to Himself.

“Remnant” is a recurring theme in the OT. They are a small group that remains from a larger community of people. Whenever remnant is used in the Bible, it is used in relation to God’s people. “For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return” (Isa 10:22; cf. Rom 9:27). The remnant is always the faithful few who remain true to God.

Prophecies are fulfilled in multi-layers. In the immediate context of Joel’s days, Joel is foretelling that God will deliver a remnant for Himself with the forthcoming of the invasions and the destruction of Zion and Jerusalem (Joel 2:32). The same promise is given in Obadiah, “But in Mount Zion, there

will be those who escape, and it shall be holy, and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions” (Obad 1:17).

Throughout history, God continued to deliver a remnant for Himself. In the Assyrian invasion, multitudes of Israelites were cast off and Micah prophesied that God would gather a remnant of Israel for His purpose.

Micah 2:12 “I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob; *I will gather the remnant of Israel*; I will set them together like a sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture, a noisy multitude of men.” (ESV, italics added)

Similarly, Jeremiah foretold that God would gather a remnant out of his flock after the Babylonian captivity.

Jeremiah 23:3 “Then *I will gather the remnant* of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply.” But in Mount Zion there shall be those who escape, and it shall be holy, and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions.” (ESV, italics added)

In the further development of Joel’s prophecy, the future of Israel will be assured by a faithful remnant whom Yahweh calls.

God’s purposes were always fulfilled by the few. In the future, God’s purposes will not be accomplished by the majority but by the few.

It is always the faithful remnant who fulfill the purpose of God. Many are called, but few are chosen (Mt 22:14). Even though the majority of Israelites rebel against God, there is always a faithful few whose hearts are totally committed to God.

In the days of Noah, out of millions of people, “only Noah was *left*, and those who were with him in the ark” (Gen 7:23). “Only *a few*, that is, eight persons were brought safely through water” (1Pet 3:20). The percentage of those who are saved is pitifully small.

Joseph suffered under his brothers’ hands and was sold to slavery. In his suffering, he said to his brothers, “God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors” (Gen 45:7). God’s purpose for Israel remains. God’s purpose for humanity will always be accomplished by the loyal few. Jesus says, “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are *few*.” (Mt 7:13-14) The narrow path is paved with hardship and suffering that refuses to compromise with the world. Many have tried to broaden the road to their peril. Only with radical obedience to Yahweh will the remnant persevere to the end without shrinking back and giving up.

Today, God is refining and purifying a remnant for Himself whom He can trust to fulfill His final purpose before this present age closes.

The key point: The remnant call on Yahweh and are called by Yahweh. Yahweh and His remnant have a dynamic and interactive relationship with each other. Be a part of a remnant that calls on Yahweh. Though the number is small, they are the hope of restoration in God’s program for humanity.

Salvation in the coming Kingdom

Joel chapter 3 paints a broad vision of the future hope of salvation in Mount Zion and Jerusalem.

Take special note of the prophecies in Joel chapter 3 regarding **Israel** (Joel 3:2, 16). There will be a *future restoration* of **Judah** (Joel 3:1, 6, 8, 18, 19, 20) and **Jerusalem** (Joel 3:1, 6, 16, 17, 20) and they will be inhabited *forever* to all generations. God chooses **Zion** as His dwelling place (Joel 3:16, 17, 21).

Restoration of Judah and Jerusalem

Joel 3:1 “For behold, in those days and at that time, when I **restore** the fortunes of **Judah** and **Jerusalem**.” (ESV, boldface added)

Joel is one of the prophets whom God uses to speak about the restoration of Israel. When will the restoration take place? The dating of the book of Joel is uncertain as Joel does not mention any ruling kings. Some scholars place him along with the prophets in the 9th or 6th century BCE while others suggest

that he lived during the second temple period in the 5th century BCE. Whether Joel lived before or after the exiles does not change the overall message regarding God's abundant mercies in *restoring* Judah and Jerusalem.

Joel focuses on Judah and Jerusalem, so there is a high possibility that the book was written during the Babylonian invasions. The locust plague probably took a few years to destroy the land, while the military invasion from Babylon went on for twenty years (606 to 586 BCE) before the temple was destroyed in Jerusalem. Joel could be living in these turbulent years when he wrote his book.

OT prophecies are often fulfilled in progressive stages. From history, we know that the ten tribes of Israel were taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 722 BCE and the inhabitants in Judah were removed to Babylon in 586 BCE. God made a promise to *restore* the captives back to the land after their exiles (Jer 16:15). "I will *restore* your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares YHWH, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile" (Jer 29:14). "I will *restore* the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says YHWH" (Jer 30:3). "I will *restore* the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel" (Ezek 39:25).

The fulfillment of this prophecy took place under the Persian rule in 538 BCE. King Cyrus freed the Jews to return to Judah to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. The ruined cities were rebuilt. God restored the land to His people. They once

again planted vineyards, built gardens, drank wine and ate plenteous fruit (cf. Amos 9:14).

In that sense, the prophecy of restoration was partially fulfilled. Prophecies are often fulfilled in progressive stages.

In the wider context of Joel 3, the prophecy progresses towards its final fulfillment when the Messiah will come to *restore all things* and put everything into subjection to God. God will finally judge all the nations for treating His people in scorn and contempt.

Joel 3:2b-3 “I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage **Israel**, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up **my land**, and have cast lots for my people and have traded a boy for a prostitute, and have sold a girl for wine and have drunk it.” (ESV, boldface added)

Throughout history, the nations scattered the Jews and divided their land; they even cast lots and enslaved them. Their evil deeds were so horrific that a captive boy would be traded for a prostitute and a girl sold for wine. This kind of lawlessness happened in history and will be multiplied at the end of the age (Mt 24:12). As prophesied by Zechariah, God will “gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then Yahweh will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle.” (Zech 14:2-3)

Lawlessness will increase at the end of the last days. “The times of Jacob’s trouble” with its terrible suffering will come upon Israel when the antichrist appears. “There will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now and never will be. And if those days are not cut short, no human being will be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be cut short” (Mt 24:21-22).

All this will set the stage for God’s judgment to come upon all the nations and for the Messiah to come to *restore Israel and the land*. Before this happens, there is still the final conflict in Jerusalem.

The final battle in the valley of Jehoshaphat

Joel 3:2a “I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat.” (ESV)

God is deeply concerned for the people of Israel. In the final conflict of the battle for Jerusalem, God will judge the nations and gather them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat which could be the crux of the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:12-16). No one is absolutely sure where the valley of Jehoshaphat is located. It would be in Jerusalem where God’s final judgment will come upon the rebellious nations. Zechariah prophesies that all nations will be gathered to battle against Jerusalem covering the area from Jerusalem to Megiddo (Zech 12-14). All the kings of the entire earth will be assembled together for this final battle on the great day of God the Almighty. Even now, “the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take

counsel together, against Yahweh and against His Anointed (Ps 2:2). The nations are fighting against God and His Messiah. This prophecy will have its final fulfillment “at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon” (Rev 16:16).

Joel 3:12 “Let the nations stir themselves up and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations” (ESV)

Yahweh God will judge the nations in this valley of decision to end the final battle over Jerusalem.

Joel 3:14 “Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of YHWH is near in the valley of Jehoshaphat” (ESV, YHWH restored)

When this final conflict takes place, we know that the day of Yahweh is just around the corner. So dreadful is the day that the sun and moon will be darkened and the stars will withdraw their shining (3:15; cf. 2:30-31). All these remarkable happenings in the sky are manifestations of the end times. When the 6th seal is broken, there will be “a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth” (Rev 6:12-13).

Joel 3:16 “YHWH roars from **Zion**, and utters his voice from **Jerusalem**, and the heavens and the earth quake. But YHWH is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of **Israel**.” (ESV, YHWH restored; boldface added)

Yahweh will then roar from Zion and utter His voice from Jerusalem. The roaring signifies God's wrath as He carries out judgment upon the nations. The heavens and the earth will quake. Yahweh is concerned for the children of Israel in these turbulent times. Those who trust in Yahweh need not fear. Why? They can call on Yahweh to save them. Yahweh will be a refuge and stronghold to them.

While the nations are being gathered for judgment, God's people are promised a glorious hope of everlasting peace to all generations. This final battle closes "the end of this age" and prepares the beginning of the new age. It is not "the end of the world" as the world will continue with Jesus reigning on earth in the millennial kingdom of the new age.

Jerusalem shall be holy

Joel 3:17 "So you shall know that I am YHWH your God, who dwells in **Zion**, my holy mountain. And **Jerusalem** shall be holy, and strangers shall *never again* pass through it." (ESV, YHWH restored, italics and boldface added)

Jerusalem is the focus of attention. The final restoration of Judah and Jerusalem will take place when the Messiah returns to rule the earth with righteousness in the coming Kingdom.

Jerusalem shall be holy. Yahweh will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land (Jer 33:15). Jeremiah prophesies also about the safety of Judah and Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 33:16 “In those days **Judah** will be saved, and **Jerusalem** will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘YHWH is our righteousness.’” (ESV, YHWH restored, italics and boldface added)

God will restore Jerusalem to glory in the final victory. This is God’s unwavering promise to the people of Israel. Other prophets also prophesy about the greatness of this city of God.

Zechariah 8:3 “Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city.”

Isaiah 1:26 “Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.”

Isaiah 60:14 “They shall call you the City of YHWH, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.”

Jeremiah 33:9 “And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity that I provide for it”

Jerusalem will be a glory before all the nations of the earth. Foreigners of conquering armies will not overrun Jerusalem again. Jerusalem will not be annihilated. God will wipe out all His enemies and there will be lasting peace in Jerusalem. Zephaniah gives further detail of this prophecy of Jerusalem.

Zephaniah 3:14-17 Sing aloud, O daughter of **Zion**; shout, O **Israel**! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of **Jerusalem**! YHWH has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, YHWH,

is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil. On that day it shall be said to **Jerusalem**: “Fear not, O **Zion**; let not your hands grow weak. YHWH your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.” (ESV, YHWH restored, italics and boldface added)

The nation of Israel will take center stage and be restored to its fullness in the coming Kingdom. This prophecy will ultimately be fulfilled when the Messiah reigns on the throne of David in Jerusalem. Yahweh will dwell in Zion and rejoice over His people with gladness and exuberant joy.

Joel 3:18 “And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streambeds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of YHWH and water the Valley of Shittim.”

Israel will be beautiful with mountains dripping sweet wine and hills flowing with milk. The land will be restored to its full abundance. It will be a fertile land flowing with milk and honey. There will be no more drought. Streambeds of Judah will flow with water. A fountain will come forth from the house of Yahweh. Even the Valley of Shittim will be filled with water. Shittim is a Hebrew word for “acacia” (BDB). In one of our journeys to Israel, we explored the land of Moab. The valley in the land of Moab is known for its barrenness yet on rare occasions “acacia trees” grow there even under extreme climatic conditions of heat and dryness, thus the valley is given its name. In the age to come, an overflowing of water

will run through this valley and transform the desolate wadi into a flourishing land. All this is symbolizing that flowing streams of living water will flow out far and wide.

Judah and Jerusalem will be inhabited forever

Joel 3:20 “But **Judah** shall be inhabited *forever*, and **Jerusalem** to *all generations*. (ESV italics and boldface added)

Joel’s message of salvation points to the future Kingdom. Not only will Judah and Jerusalem be fully restored, but also everlasting peace will be in Judah and Jerusalem for people to inhabit forever. This will take place when God sets up His literal Kingdom on earth.

As prophesied by Daniel, “the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall *never be destroyed*, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand *forever*.” (Dan 2:44) God will set up this kingdom through the “son of man” (Dan 7:13). Daniel sees the son of man as a man-figure who comes in the presence of the Ancient of Days. To this man is given dominion and glory and a kingdom such that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed (v.14). The prophecy points to the Messiah King who will rule this future Kingdom and restore all things such that this Kingdom will not collapse like previous kingdoms but will stand forever.

The eternal city will be established in Jerusalem. The literal throne will be set up for a human king to rule and he is descended from the line of David. This King will sit on the Davidic throne and make Jerusalem holy. He will bring all things into subjection to God. People will then be able to live with everlasting peace in Jerusalem from generation to generation.

The Messiah will restore all things

We must read the OT and NT as a unified whole for the complete message of salvation. The OT prophets foretell the Messiah who will restore all things. The prophecies regarding the Messiah are fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

Acts 3:20-21 "... the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for **restoring** all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago" (ESV, boldface added)

In the NT, Jesus began fulfilling his Messianic mission in his life and teaching. After Jesus' death, God fully endorsed Jesus as His Messiah by raising him from the dead and exalting him to sit at His right hand. Heaven received him. Jesus' mission is not finished yet. Jesus as the Messiah King will return to earth to do *the restoration work* by putting all things under subjection to God so that God may be all in all (1Cor 15:28).

The disciples were always longing for the restoration of Israel. Their hope is in the Messiah to restore Israel. Before Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples asked Jesus an urgent

question that was burning in their hearts: “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6) To this question, Jesus replied that the restoration will take place at the time that is known only to the Father (v.7). Only the Father knows when Jesus will return to earth. Even Jesus himself does not know. Jesus will remain in heaven until the Father tells him to return to earth to restore Israel.

The Messianic mission of Jesus

All through Jesus’ life, he grew up with full knowledge of his Messianic mission. Even before the conception, the angel Gabriel had already announced to Mary about the appointed role of Jesus in the future Kingdom.

Luke 1:32-33 “He will be great and will be called the son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob *forever*, and of his kingdom there will be *no end*.” (ESV, italics added)

“Lord God” is a title of Yahweh. What Israel long awaited in the OT, the promise of the Messianic king, is now made known to Mary. She will bear a son and call him Jesus. Even the future of Jesus is foretold by Gabriel in this visit. Yahweh will grant Jesus the throne of his father David to rule over His kingdom. Jesus is the one to reign on the future Davidic throne over the nation of Israel forever. This Kingdom will not collapse but will stand forever.

Then at Jesus’ birth, an angel of the Lord openly announced to the shepherds, “For unto you is born this day in the city of

David a Savior, who is *Christ the Lord*" (Lk 2:11). The word "Christ" comes from the Greek word *χριστός* (*chrīstós*) which is translated from the Hebrew word *מָשִׁיחַ* (*Mašíaḥ*). Both carry the same meaning: "Messiah, the one who is anointed". Jesus is the Messiah Lord.

When baby Jesus was presented at the Temple of Jerusalem, Simeon held the baby in front of his parents and blessed God because he had seen God's salvation. The Spirit specifically revealed to righteous Simeon that he would not see death before he had seen the *Lord's Christ* (Lk 2:25-26). In the NT, sometimes the word "Lord" refers to God, and sometimes to Jesus. Here, the Lord refers to God. Simeon had now seen baby Jesus as the promised Messiah, God's Anointed one. Joseph and Mary were told specifically about the appointed role of Jesus as God's Messiah. As a boy growing up, Jesus would have learned all these remarkable events from his parents.

At the age of 12, Jesus was found in the temple of Jerusalem sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions (Lk 2:46). When his parents found him after he had gone missing, he said "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (v.49). Jesus as a young boy was already pre-occupied with the things of Yahweh, whom he calls "Father" in the NT.

As the years went on, Jesus proved himself worthy of the high calling of the Messiah. He performed signs and wonders in the power of God. The focal point of Jesus' Messianic mission was to bring the Kingdom of God on earth. The presence

of the Kingdom was brought near in Jesus' first coming when he manifested the power of the Kingdom in his life and teaching. In that sense, Jesus has begun establishing the Kingdom but not yet in its full completion until his return to earth.

With the exaltation of Jesus, the Messiah now rules as head over the Church. We can experience the reality of the Kingdom individually as well as corporately in the church that lives under the Lordship of Christ. The mission of Jesus as Messiah is not finished yet and is still continuing. When Christ was on earth, the Kingdom had not yet ruled over the earth. There comes a future time when the literal Kingdom will rule over Israel and all nations.

In the *Parousia* (the second coming of Christ), Jesus will fulfill the prophecy of the everlasting peace in Jerusalem (Joel 3:17, 20). The Messiah will be the one to bring in the final restoration to Judah and Jerusalem (Joel 3:1). When Jesus the Messiah returns to reign on earth, the Kingdom of God will come into full fruition on earth during the millennium. Jesus the Messiah will put all things in subjection under his feet so that he can bring the entire world to submit to God's rule (1Cor 15:24-28). "All things" include people, nations, angels and all creation. The Messiah King will rule in righteousness over Israel and the world until all the enemies are destroyed, including Satan who will be thrown into the lake of fire at the end of the millennial reign (Rev 20:10). The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1Cor 15:26). Then death and Hades will also be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:14). It will be in

the age to come that Jesus will consummate the Kingdom of God through his righteous reign on earth.

God Dwells in Zion

The book of Joel ends with these significant words:

Joel 3:21b “YHWH dwells in **Zion**.” (ESV, YHWH restored)

The holy mountain of **Zion** is specifically chosen to be the place where Yahweh dwells. Zion is one of the hills of Jerusalem. Why Zion? “I have *set my King on Zion*, my holy hill” (Ps 2:6). God decrees Zion to be the place where He will set up a man to be His King on earth.

The promise of salvation will finally take place when this man reigns as King over all the earthly kings. “The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ* and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15). The sounding of this seventh and last of the trumpets signals the arrival of the long-awaited Kingdom. This is indeed the great hope of salvation for humankind.

Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ

Christ will return to earth as King of kings to bring everlasting peace to Israel and the world. Life in the millennial years will be “heaven on earth” under Jesus’ rule. There will be peace among the nations. People will live in harmony with one another. There will be no more wars. It will take a process to

complete the restoration work so that all creation may come into perfect harmony.

The restoration is not magical work that can happen automatically in an instant. Ponder on the five days that God used to create light, firmament, sea, land, vegetation, sun, moon, birds and sea creatures before He created man on the 6th day. God spent a great amount of time to create the natural world. Even the Garden of Eden did not happen with a snap of a finger. Yahweh God planted Eden with His own hands (Gen 2:8). If you have ever planted a garden, you would know that it takes years to make a small garden look beautiful, not to mention the great Garden of Eden. It will need the millennial years for Jesus to lead his saints to bring everlasting peace and harmony to all creation. Finally, there will be no more wars. Nations will live in love and peace.

Perfect harmony will come upon the animal world. “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together, and a little child shall lead them.” (Isa 11:6; cf. Isa 65:25) Picture the astounding scene of a lion grazing with a lamb. The lion is not going to eat up the lamb. The goat will not be harmed by the leopard. The calf will not be threatened by the lion. All ferocious wild beasts will even submit to a little child. The nursing child can play safely near the hole of a cobra. A toddler can put his hands in the nests of the deadly snakes without harm. (Isa 11:8) Everything is safe. Meditate on this day and night. This is how I live in the Word of God.

God dwells with His people forever on earth

Joel's prophecies ultimately point to the future when God dwells in Zion with His people forever.

Psalm 132:13-18 For YHWH has chosen **Zion**; he has desired it for his dwelling place: "This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread. Her priests I will clothe with salvation, and her saints will shout for joy. There I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but on him his crown will shine." (ESV, YHWH restored)

Yahweh desired and chose Zion for His dwelling place forever. Zion is the place Yahweh chose to reside in with His saints and with the king, His anointed.

Ezekiel gives further detail regarding God's everlasting covenant with His people, and God will set up His sanctuary to dwell with them forever.

Ezekiel 37:24-28 "My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there *forever*, and David my servant shall be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an *everlasting* covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst *forevermore*. My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that I am YHWH who sanctifies Israel, when my

sanctuary is in their midst *forevermore.*” (ESV, YHWH restored; italics added)

Christ, the one sitting on the Davidic throne, shall be King and Shepherd of all. God has given Jesus all authority to rule heaven and earth (Mt 28:18). Christ will be the one to unite all things in heaven and on earth in God’s plan (Eph 1:9-10). Christ will finally deliver the Kingdom to God the Father (1Cor 15:24-28). God will then purify the creation by fire.

There will be a new heaven and a new earth. The New Jerusalem will descend out of heaven from God onto the new earth (Rev 21:1-2). “He will dwell with them and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God” (v.3). The new earth will continue forever as God’s dwelling place with men.

Our hope of salvation is in the coming Kingdom and the New Jerusalem coming to earth with Yahweh dwelling in Zion. The final goal of salvation is that God will tabernacle with His people forever on earth.

Inherit the Kingdom with Christ

We look forward to the day when we will inherit the Kingdom with Christ. The popular Gospel message today proclaims that the goal of salvation is to go up to heaven when we die. This tragically reduces salvation to a ticket to heaven. That is not the message of salvation in the Bible. Somewhere along the way, we have been misled to think that we are saved in

order to obtain a seat in heaven. On the contrary, God has designed a magnificent program of salvation for humanity to inherit His Kingdom on earth with Jesus as the first-born of the creation.

Christ will reign in Zion but Christ will not be reigning alone. Jesus said, “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne.” (Rev 3:21) Having a place to sit on Jesus’ throne does not mean that we are going to be sitting on Jesus’ lap playing the guitar and singing songs in heaven. Sitting on Jesus’ throne is figurative language that points to the privilege of reigning as kings in Jesus’ authority. Can you catch the vision of the Kingdom of God and of His Christ?

The vision of salvation has to do with the glorious Kingdom in which Christ will reign as King in Jerusalem and his remnant will co-reign with him. Are you prepared to co-reign with Christ? This is the ultimate purpose for which men were originally created. For God said to Adam and Eve: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and *subdue* it, and have *dominion* over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen 1:28). “Subdue” and “dominion” have to do with *ruling* and putting all creation *under control*. Right at the beginning, men were given the role *to rule* under God’s authority. It is a delegated rule given to men to act as God’s representative. Adam disobeyed and failed. Jesus, the “last Adam” (1Cor 15:45) or “the second man” (v.47), succeeded in his perfect obedience to God. God then put all rule and authority under the feet of Jesus. Through Jesus, we now have a foretaste of

“the powers of the age to come” (Heb 6:5). The Spirit is given to Christians as a guarantee (2Cor 1:22; 5:5) not merely for the assurance of eternal life, but more importantly as an inheritance to function in the fullness of power in the coming Kingdom. In the new age, the saints of God will be granted fully “the powers of the age to come” to rule with Jesus who will restore all things by conquering all the enemies and bringing all nations into subjection to God.

Man is the crowning glory of God with Christ being the first fruit of the new creation. As the firstborn of all creation (Col 1:15), Jesus is the *leading man* of the new creation, *the firstborn among the brothers* (Rom 8:29). I now begin to appreciate the prayer of the Psalmist, “O Yahweh, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens ... *what is man* that you are mindful of him and the son of man that you care for him?” (Ps 8:1,4; cf. Heb 2:6-8). Why does God shower so much love on man? God’s eternal purpose surrounds around man. Not only does Yahweh want Jesus to rule with Him (Dan 7:14), but in God’s magnificent design, He desires to give His everlasting kingdom also to the saints of the Most High (Dan 7:27). Humans have such a glorious role to play in God’s plan of salvation.

We await “the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:23) on that day so that we can co-reign with Christ to fulfill God’s unique purpose for men. This Kingdom will be “in the new world, when the *son of man will sit on his glorious throne*, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging

the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mt 19:28; Lk 22:29-30). All this will take place in the coming Kingdom.

As we call on the name of Yahweh, we call with His Kingdom in view. Jesus reigns in the Church today and he will reign fully on the earthly Davidic throne to rule Israel and the world. Unfortunately, the Gospel message today is non-messianic and non-monotheistic.

The Bible proclaims that a *Jewish man*
will rule as King over all the earthly kings
to bring all nations to *the one God Yahweh*.

God wants us to get excited to participate dynamically with the rule of Christ in the Church today and also to reign with Christ in the future Kingdom to bring people to Yahweh. Make it your goal to call on Yahweh for it entails a dynamic partnership with Jesus now and in the future in accomplishing God’s ultimate purpose on earth.

The promise of our salvation is that we will “inherit the Kingdom” that our Father prepared for us from the foundation of the world (Mt 25:34). Jesus does not invite us to go up to heaven but to inherit the Kingdom with him.

God has appointed Jesus “heir of all things” (Heb 1:2). If Jesus were God, he would not need an inheritance from God. We can share the eternal inheritance with Jesus because God the Father has given it all to Jesus.

With God as our Father and we His children, we are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ. Together with Jesus, we

will inherit the earth and dwell upon it forever (Ps 37:29). If we have the meekness of Jesus, we shall also inherit the earth with him (Mt 5:5; Ps 37:11). He who overcomes “shall inherit all things” (KJV, Rev 21:7) from God, for God says, “I will be his God and he shall be my sons.”

Salvation is complete when we finally “inherit eternal life” (cf. Mt 19:29; Mk 10:17; Lk 10:25; Lk 18:18) to live with God forever on the new earth.

Life of the Kingdom in the Church

We do not need to wait until the future to experience the Kingdom of God. The reign of God begins today as we live out the law of His Kingdom in this life.

The purpose of our salvation is to live for the Kingdom.

We are citizens of this Kingdom when we are saved. God has “delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Col 1:13-14). Jesus, the first-born of the new creation, demonstrated the power of the Kingdom in his life. As we implement Jesus’ teaching and become his disciples, we live out the life of the Kingdom. The Church plays an important role to advance God’s Kingdom in this present age. Jesus as the head of the Church rules as Lord in the Church. One day, Jesus’ reign will be fully manifested on earth in the coming Kingdom.

In this present age, we can experience God's Kingship in a church that acknowledges God as King and Jesus as Lord. A person who calls on the name of YHWH acquires a lifestyle of the Kingdom through active participation in the body of Christ. God's transformation work is taking place in us now as we make it our goal "to shine like the sun" in the kingdom of our Father (Mt 13:43; cf. Dan 12:3).

Today, we experience the Kingdom in a limited sense as God's Kingship is manifested on earth only "in part" in this age. God's Kingship will be manifested in its fullness in the coming Kingdom through Jesus' physical reign on earth.

How you live your short life on earth will determine your future involvement in the future Kingdom that will last one thousand years. If only you knew the salvation that God has prepared for mankind, you would live radically for Him today.

The Kingdom of God is God's redemptive reign. Let us be worthy to enter into the joy of the Messianic Kingdom (Mt 25:10; 21; 23) and "inherit the Kingdom" (Mt 25:34). Children of God who have saving faith live for the Kingdom, for "if children, then heirs — heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17).

Conclusion

The message of salvation in Joel is relevant to us as we are now nearer to the day of Yahweh. As Paul says, “For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed” (Rom 13:11). Do you see the urgency to call on the Name of Yahweh? How can you call on Yahweh if Yahweh is not your God? How can you call on God’s Name if you do not even know His Name?

For most of my Christian life, I was not aware of the significance of God’s Name Yahweh. For decades, I only called on the name of Jesus. I will expound on what it means to call on the name of Jesus in Acts 2 and Romans 10. Our calling on the name of Jesus needs to be founded on the firm foundation of calling on Yahweh. Yahweh is the God who saves us through Jesus the Messiah. Spend time digging into the riches of the Name of Yahweh. It is only in the last ten years that I spent every day learning about Yahweh in Scripture. Since 2013, I started writing blogs to share about the Name of Yahweh on the internet. The motivation behind this book is also to inspire you to grasp the significance of the Name so that you will call on Yahweh. If the Name Yahweh does not interest you, you would have no desire to spend time to call on Yahweh.

Calling on Yahweh is not invoking the Name in a mechanical manner as though the calling is something magical. The calling is exercised with faith in Yahweh God.

I call on God’s Name because I trust in Yahweh as my God and desire to build an ongoing friendship with Him. The

calling is not a casual uttering of the Name but a deep cry expressing my full submission to Yahweh, to live under the authority of His Name. “Yahweh is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth” (Ps 145:18). Call on Yahweh with a pure and honest heart that trusts in Yahweh alone without wavering.

Let’s heed the message of Joel and call on Yahweh God in truthfulness of heart, with fasting, weeping and mourning. At the beginning of the book of Joel, God’s judgment first came upon the people of Yahweh. The people of God needed to lament and return to Yahweh for deliverance. The people of God called on the name of Yahweh from their hearts. Yahweh saved the remnant who called His Name. As a result, the remnant became a sign to the nations. The nations were then given a chance to repent. Afterwards, God’s judgment came upon the nations.

We are now living in the last days. God’s judgment will first come upon His Church (1Pet 4:17). Among the seven churches in Revelation, only two proved to be faithful, namely Smyrna and Philadelphia. Not all churches are in good spiritual condition. There is a remnant even among the churches of God. Churches like Smyrna and Philadelphia will stand out as signs to the nations in the end times.

Let’s be among the remnant as an individual and also as a church. Let’s be a sign in the last days to bring the *Gospel of the Kingdom* to *all* nations. Call on Yahweh for Yahweh is King. Call on Yahweh and live under His Kingship individually as well as corporately as a church.

Start calling on Yahweh today. If you don't call on the Name of Yahweh now, how will you call on Yahweh for your final salvation?

Salvation and blessings will come on the remnant who call on Yahweh and the remnant whom Yahweh calls (Joel 2:32). The end time will be beyond human endurance, so the only way we can survive is to call on Yahweh. Calling on Yahweh is a lifestyle that fully trusts in Yahweh with a total heart.

Whenever I call on the name of YHWH, “hallowed be Your Name”, I do not stop there. I also pray the next three important words: “Your Kingdom come” (Lk 11:2). As we call on the name of YHWH, let's long and pray for the Kingdom to come. May your will be done *on earth* as it is in heaven (Mt 6:10).

Acts 2:21

“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Now that we are in the new covenant, we want to understand what it means to call on the name of the Lord for our salvation. Acts 2:21 will be expounded in the light of the sermon at Pentecost and the overall theme of the book of Acts.

The Overall Theme in Acts

The New Testament was originally written in Koine Greek. There is a total of 2088 distinct Greek words in the book of Acts.¹⁰ In the following table, all the significant words that

¹⁰ The Greek New Testament, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Nestle-Aland 28th edition, has 5420 distinct Greek words with a total count of 138,150 words. Of the 5420 words, about 2000 occur only once. About 172 words occur more than 100 times, and 138 words occur between 50 to 100 times. My seminary professor in my Greek class told me that if we could memorize these 310 Greek words, we would be able to read 80% of the Greek New Testament. This gave me a lot of incentive to learn Biblical Greek.

occur 25 times or more in Acts are listed.¹¹ The prepositions (into, in, at, on, according, of, from, out of), conjunctions (and, but, also, for, because, or), personal pronouns (who, which, what, that, this, our, we, mine) and less significant verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs are taken out. By looking at the significant words that occur frequently, one can get a quick overview of the book.

¹¹ The statistics for the Greek words in the book of Acts are tabulated from Holman Christian Standard Bible, used by permission. I am using the 2009 2nd edition of HCSB whose textual source for the NT is Nestle-Aland 27.

Book of Acts — Significant Words with 25+ occurrences				
Strong's Number	Greek Word	Translation	Part of Speech	Occurrences
G2316	θεός	God	noun	167
G3004	λέγω	say, speak	verb	129
G3972	Παῦλος	Paul	name	128
G2962	κύριος	Lord	noun	106
G0435	άνήρ	man	noun	100
G2250	ήμέρα	day	noun	94
G0191	ἀκούω	hear	verb	89
G2453	Ἰουδαῖος	Jews	adj*	79
G4151	πνεῦμα	spirit	noun	70
G2424	Ἰησοῦς	Jesus	name	68
G3056	λόγος	word	noun	65
G2980	λαλέω	speak	verb	60
G3686	ὄνομα	name	noun	60
G0080	ἀδελφός	brother	noun	57
G4074	Πέτρος	Peter	name	56
G0040	ἅγιος	holy	adj	53
G2992	λαός	people	noun	48
G0444	ἄνθρωπος	man	noun	46
G0450	ἀνίστημι	arise	verb	45
G1484	ἔθνος	Gentiles	noun	43
G4172	πόλις	city	noun	43
G4100	πιστεύω	believe	verb	37
G2419	Ἰερουσαλήμ	Jerusalem	noun	36
G3962	πατήρ	father	noun	35
G1093	γῆ	earth, land	noun	32
G4396	προφήτης	prophet	noun	30
G0652	ἀπόστολος	apostle	noun	28
G0649	ἀποστέλλω	to send forth	verb	25
G3101	μαθητής	disciple	noun	28
G5547	Χριστός	Christ	adj*	25

* The word is technically an adjective but is used as a noun

Let's pay special attention to the following significant words in Acts:

- (1) **“God”** (θεός, *theos*) is listed as the most frequent, with 167 occurrences. The book of Acts is God-centered. The focus is not on the apostles but on God. The book could just as well be titled *the acts of God* or *the acts of God and His Spirit* instead of the acts of the apostles. The focus is on how God, through His Spirit, empowers the apostles to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Who is *theos* in Acts?

1. *Theos* refers to “the Father” (1:4, 7; 2:33)
2. God is “the Creator” of heaven and earth (4:24; 14:15; 17:24)
3. God is spoken of as “the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the God of our fathers” (3:13; 5:30; 7:32; 22:14; 24:14)

Exod 3:16 tells us that “*Yahweh*” is the “God of the fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob”.

The God of the OT is the same God of the NT. So whenever “God” occurs in the NT, “God” refers to *Yahweh*.

In Acts, only a handful of verses has *theos* referring to idols (7:40; 14:11; 19:26) and these are notated with a small letter ‘g’ (gods).

- (2) **“Paul”** has a high frequency of 128 occurrences (and another 23 times is addressed as Saul). In Acts chapters 13 to 28, the narrative concentrates on Paul and his missionary activities. “Peter” occurs only 56 times, and mainly in Acts chapters 1–5 and 8–12.
- (3) **“Lord”** (κύριος, *kyrios*) has 106 occurrences.
- Sometimes *kyrios* refers to Yahweh God (Acts 2:39; 3:22; 4:24, 26; 5:9; 7:31, 33; etc)
 - Very often, *kyrios* refers to Jesus (1:21; 2:36; 4:33; 7:59, 60; etc.)
 - In some situations *kyrios* may refer to either Yahweh or to Jesus (11:24; 20:19; etc).
- (4) **“Jews”** (Ἰουδαῖος) with 79 occurrences is an important key word in Acts. Most of the occurrences are related to Paul’s ministry. “Gentiles” (ἔθνος) has only 43 occurrences, most of which are related to Paul.
- (5) **“Spirit”** (πνεῦμα) occurring 70 times predominantly refers to the Spirit of God (2:4, 17, 18 etc.) and is noted with a capital “S”. The Spirit is often combined with the adjective “holy”. Spirit is also used in reference to the “spirit of Jesus” (16:7), or a human spirit (7:59), or an evil spirit (19:15, 16).
- (6) **“Holy”** occurs 53 times. Most of the time, it refers to the Spirit. Other times, “holy” refers to:

- “holy one” (3:14)
- “the holy child Jesus” (4:27, 30)
- “holy angel” (10:22)
- “holy prophets” (3:21)
- “holy place or holy ground” (6:13; 7:33)
- “saints” (9:13; 32; 41; 26:10)

The combined total occurrences of “holy” and “spirit” come to 123 times which is still less than the occurrences of “God” (165 times). The focus in Acts is on God more than on the Spirit.

- (7) **“Jesus”** (Ἰησοῦς) is mentioned 68 times, less than half the occurrences of “God”. The book of Acts is God centered rather than Jesus centered. Whenever Jesus is mentioned, it often ties in to the work that God does in him (2:22, 32, 36; 3:26; 4:10; 10:38 etc.). Jesus is mentioned with the titles “Lord Jesus” (15 times), “Jesus Christ” (8 times), “Christ Jesus” (1 time), and “Lord Jesus Christ” (3 times).
- (8) **“Christ”**, which is Χριστός in Greek, means the Anointed, the Messiah. “Christ” as a title occurs 14 times on its own (2:30-31, 36; 3:18; 4:26; 8:5; 9:20, 22; 17:3, 3; 18:5, 28; 24:24; 26:23). Other times it is “Jesus Christ” or “Lord Jesus Christ” or “Christ Jesus”. The combined total occurrences of “Jesus” and “Christ” come to 94, still very much less than the occurrences of “God” (165 times). All this should alert us that the main focus of Acts is on God.

Word Studies

In doing word studies, it is important to understand how each individual word is used in the context of the passage. There is the danger of concluding an isolated word to be the key theme of a book solely on the grounds of its high frequency of occurrences.

- (1) **“Day”** in Acts occurs frequently (94 times), but the word “day” mainly refers to “a period of time” (BDB) especially when the plural “days” is used (1:3, 5, etc). “Day” bears great significance in Acts when it refers to “the day of Pentecost” (2:1; 20:16); “the day of the Lord” (2:20); “the last days” (2:17).

By contrast, in the book of Joel, the word “day” with its high frequency of occurrences bears great significance as the word “day” is mainly used in relation to “the day of Yahweh” and the day of God’s judgment. In doing word studies, we need to group the word under different headings to see how the word is used semantically in the context. It takes skill and hard work to analyze each word carefully before one can conclude the key theme of a book.

- (2) **“Speak” and “word”** are also significant words on the list. On their own, they don’t bear much significance, but when these words are studied in their context, they bear deep meaning.

Often times the “speaking” is related to the “word of God”:

- “they speak the word” (4:29, 31; 13:46)
- “preaching the word” (8:4; 25; 11:19; 13:5; 14:25; 15:35, 36 16:32; 17:13)
- “ministry of the word” (6:4)
- and people “believed” when “they heard and received the word” that was preached (2:41; 4:4; 8:14; 10:44; 11:1; 13:7, 44; 15:7).

The apostles carried the Gospel to the end of the earth by *speaking the word* of God boldly. It is the word that draws people to salvation. We must work hard to minister the word. Let the word of God prevail (19:20) in the lives of the believers.

(3) “**Name**” is another prominent key word in Acts. Most of the time, “name” is associated with the Lord Jesus:

- “in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:38; 3:6; 10:48; 16:18)
- “in the name of Jesus” (4:18; 5:40; 9:27)
- “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (8:16; 9:29; 19:5, 13, 17)
- “for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (15:26)
- “for the name of the Lord Jesus” (21:13)
- “by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth” (4:10)

- “the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (26:9)

This is relevant to our study as the question that needs to be answered in Acts 2:21 is whether the calling on the name of the Lord also refers to the calling on the name of the Lord Jesus.

Peter’s Sermon at Pentecost

The following table lists all the significant words in the message at Pentecost, Acts 2:14b–40.¹²

¹² The statistics for the significant Greek words in Acts 2:14b–40 are tabulated from Holman Christian Standard Bible, used by permission. I am using the 2009 2nd edition of HCSB whose textual source for the NT is Nestle-Aland 27.

Acts 2:14b–40 — Significant Words				
Strong's Number	Greek Word	Translation	Part of Speech	Occurrences
G2316	Θεός	God	noun	10
G2962	Κύριος	Lord	noun	7
G0435	άνήρ	man, male	noun	5
G2250	ἡμέρα	day	noun	5
G3708	ὁράω	see, perceive	verb	4
G1492	εἶδω	know, see	verb	4
G2424	Ἰησοῦς	Jesus	noun	4
G3004	λέγω	say, speak	verb	4
G4151	πνεῦμα	spirit	noun	4
G4561	σάρξ	flesh, carnal	noun	3
G5547	Χριστός	Christ	adj*	3
G0191	ἀκούω	hear	verb	3
G1138	Δαβίδ	David	noun	3
G1188	δεξιός	right hand	adj	3
G1632	ἐκχέω	pour out	verb	3
G2036	ἔπω	say, speak	verb	3
G0435	άνήρ	man, male	noun	3
G2983	λαμβάνω	receive	verb	2
G1860	ἐπαγγελία	promise	noun	2
G3686	ὄνομα	name	noun	2
G4395	προφητεύω	prophesy	verb	2
G4396	προφήτης	prophet	noun	2
G0450	ἀνίστημι	arise	verb	2
G4308	προοράω	foresee	verb	2
G4268	πρόγνωσις	foreknowledge	noun	1
G4275	προεἶδω	foresee	verb	1

* The word is technically an adjective but is used as a noun

- (1) **“God”** (θεός) ranks as the one with the highest frequency, with 10 occurrences (2:17, 22, 22, 23, 24, 30, 32, 33, 36, 39). Just as “God” has the highest frequency of occurrence in the book of Acts, Yahweh God is also the main focus in Peter’s sermon.
- (2) **“Lord”** κύριος (*kyrios*) has 7 occurrences (2:20, 21, 25, 34, 34, 36, 39). Sometimes *kyrios* refers to Yahweh. Other times *kyrios* refers to Jesus. “Lord” is the third most significant noun in the book of Acts. Obviously, “Lord” plays a significant role in both the sermon and the entire book.
- (3) **“Day”** (ἡμέρα) occurs either in the plural form pointing to the “last days” (2:17, 18) or in the singular form to “the day of the Lord” (2:20). The other two times simply refer to an ordinary day (2:15, 29).
- (4) **“Jesus”** (Ἰησοῦς) occurs 4 times and “Christ” (Χριστός) 3 times. “Right hand” (δεξιός) with 3 occurrences refers to the place of special honor and authority given to Jesus by God. The “name” (ὄνομα) occurring twice is related to name of the Lord (2:21) and to Jesus Christ (2:38). “Jesus,” “Christ,” and “name” are also significant words in the entire book of Acts.
- (5) **“Spirit”** (4 times), **“pour out”** (3 times), and **“promise”** (2 times) can be grouped together as they describe the promise of the pouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. Spirit is also a significant theme of Acts.

- (6) **“David”** (Δαυίδ) with 3 occurrences bears significance as Peter alludes to two Messianic Psalms written by David: Psalm 16 speaks of the resurrection of the Messiah, and Psalm 110 speaks of the exaltation of the Messiah. “David” occurs only 11 times in the entire book of Acts. A major concentration is found in the sermon and chapter 13.
- (7) **The last groups of family words:** “prophet”, “prophecy” (combined 4 times), “foreknowledge” and “foresee” (combined 4 times) refer to the prophecies given by the two prophets, Joel and David, and how they are fulfilled at Pentecost.

Key words in the Peter’s Sermon

The sermon at Pentecost can be summarized in the following manner:

God is the key figure in the sermon. Yahweh God is the One who is actively involved in the work of salvation for mankind. God performed mighty works of signs and wonders through Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God. Jesus’ death on the cross was in God’s predetermined plan. God raised Jesus up and made him Lord and Christ. Peter mentions two prophets: David and Joel. God fulfills the prophecy promised to David regarding the Messiah taking up the Davidic throne. After God exalted Jesus to sit at His right hand, Jesus received the promise of the Spirit from the Father. The pouring forth of

the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecy given in Joel. The last days and the day of the Lord are turbulent days, therefore “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

First Part of the Sermon Joel’s Prophecy (Acts 2:16-21)

We are so blessed to have this first sermon recorded for us in detail. A Bible passage can be put into a block sentence diagram format to help readers see the main subjects and parallel phrases easily. A sentence block diagram of Acts 2 is provided in Appendix 2 for your reference.

The sermon at Pentecost can be subdivided into two main sections. In the first part, Peter explains the pouring of the Spirit in connection to a prophecy in Joel 2:28-32 which was made about 600 years earlier.

Acts 2:16-21 “But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and

magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (ESV)

(1) Peter explains how the pouring of the Spirit begins its fulfillment at Pentecost.

(2) Peter interprets Joel 2:28 “and it shall come to pass afterward” as “and in the *last days* it shall be ...” (Acts 2:17) as a fulfillment in his time, for Peter sees that his time is the last days. Since that time, already in the past 2000 years, the Kingdom of God has been moving forward dynamically in the power of the Holy Spirit.

(3) God declares, “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh” (v.17). This is the beginning of a unique movement in which everyone can be empowered by the Spirit in overflowing abundance. In the Old Testament times, priests, kings and prophets were anointed with the Holy Spirit. In the new covenant, God’s Spirit is not limited to a select few but can be poured on all flesh. Regardless of our status and whether we are old or young, servants or masters, sons or daughters, the promise of the Spirit is available to everyone through Jesus in the last days.

(4) The purpose of the outpouring of the Spirit is for sons and daughters to prophesy, young men to see visions, and old men to dream dreams. God’s people are given greater access to discerning God’s divine will through prophetic utterances, visions and dreams.

(5) God repeats His declaration, “I will pour out my Spirit and they shall prophesy” (v.18). The clause “and they shall prophesy” is not in the original passage in Joel. This addition from Peter reveals that God desires that His people exercise the prophetic ministry in the church. Prophets are God’s mouthpiece to speak forth the message of God to their generation. The words of Moses come to mind: “Would that all Yahweh’s people were prophets, that Yahweh would put his Spirit on them” (Num 11:29). Pray that Yahweh will raise up more prophets to speak forth His words to address this generation.

(6) God says, “I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below” before the day of the Lord comes. The dramatic changes to the sun, moon, and stars are eschatological signs connected to God’s judgment in the end times.

It is important to distinguish the usage of the terms: “last days” and “end times”. The *last days* have already begun when Jesus came. Heb 1:2 says, “In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son”. The beginning of the last days had begun in the 1st Century and the last days have been continuing through the period of the church until the return of Christ. We are now at the end of the last days which is often known as the *end times* referring to a series of final events of the last days before Jesus returns. We are living in the end times. The prophecy in Joel tells us that there will be great danger and destruction in the final days of the end times. Who

can endure it? Only those who call on the name of the Lord will find strength and be saved.

Second Part of the Sermon

God's work in Jesus (Acts 2:22-39)

The second part of Peter's sermon focuses on God's work in Jesus. God saves us through Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested by God. How?

1. God attests the man Jesus (v.22)
2. God raises Jesus from the dead (v.24)
3. God fulfills His promise to David regarding the Messiah (vv. 25–32; 34–35)
4. God exalts Jesus to sit at His right hand (v.33)
5. The Father gives the Spirit to Jesus to pour onto the disciples (v.33)
6. God has made “this Jesus” to be both Lord and Christ (v.36)

The sermon ends with: “For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself” (Acts 2:39). This statement draws the audience back to the prophecy in Joel 2:32c, “among the survivors shall be those whom Yahweh calls.” God in the NT refers to Yahweh. There is a remnant whom Yahweh God calls to Himself. Peter's message is one unifying theme as he takes the audience back to the prophecy of Joel.

God's Work of Salvation Through Jesus

The outpouring of the Spirit marks a new period of God's salvific work. The two parts of the sermon at Pentecost need to be studied as an entire whole for the complete message of salvation. As soon as Peter finishes explaining the outpouring of the Spirit in relation to Joel's prophecy, he immediately explains how God works out His salvation plan through the life of Jesus, his atoning death, resurrection, ascension and exaltation. It is at the exaltation to heaven that Jesus received the promise of the Spirit from the Father (Acts 2:33). The pouring out of the Spirit is a significant work of Christ for our salvation.

Point 1 – God attests the man Jesus

Acts 2:22 “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, *a man* attested to you *by God* with mighty works and wonders and signs that *God did through him* in your midst, as you yourselves know.” (ESV, italics and underline added)

Jesus of Nazareth is *a man* approved by God. It is the God of Israel who actively performed all these powerful deeds and miracles through the man Jesus. The fact that Jesus could perform signs and wonders has nothing to do with the notion of an alleged deity attributed to him. Jesus himself testifies that “the Father who dwells in me does His works” (Jn 14:10).

A sharp reader would observe the clear distinction of God who is the Father and the man Jesus in whom God dwells. God is the One who performs signs and wonders through the man Jesus.

Jesus calls himself *a man*. “You seek to kill me, *a man* who has told you the truth that I heard from God” (Jn 8:40). The apostle Paul calls him “*the man* Christ Jesus” (1Tim 2:5). Contrary to the popular notion that Christ Jesus is God, the Bible plainly states that Christ Jesus is “the man”. In the OT, the Messiah is predicted to be “*a man* of sorrows” (Isa 53:3). In Paul’s message to the Athenians, he says that God has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness “by *a man* whom he has appointed.” (Acts 17:31) Isn’t this surprising? The one to judge the world is a man. Jesus is the man appointed by God to judge the world.

Jesus is in the category of *man*. Jesus is not “God-man”, a mythological concept used in the pagan world but not in the Bible. The notion of Jesus as a demigod or even God would be totally foreign to the biblical writers.

Jesus as man is called the “son of God”. “Son of God” is a title for the human Messiah. We need to have a sharp mind to understand the title “son of God. Jesus is the “son of God” but Jesus is not “God the son”. Never once is Jesus called “God the son” in the Bible. These two terms do not mean the same thing. Unfortunately, most Christians are unaware of the differences and mistakenly equate them to be the same. “Son of

God” is God’s son, one who is distinguished from God. “God the son” implies that the son also is God and that he is a part of God as the second person in the Godhead.¹³

Peter confesses Jesus as “the Christ, *the son of the living God*” (Mt 16:16) or in John’s words, “Jesus is the Christ, *the son of God*” (Jn 20:31). Notice, Peter and John do not claim Jesus Christ to be “God the Son”. The term “God the son” was created by the Gentile church fathers in the 3rd century which eventually led to the Trinity Doctrine in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed in 381 CE. Truths are distorted and confusion is set in when non-Biblical terms are used to explain Biblical theology.

The key point: Jesus of Nazareth is “a man” proven worthy and endorsed by God. God performs signs and wonders through Jesus.

Point 2 – God raises Jesus from the dead

Acts 2:23-24 “This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. *God raised him up*, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.” (ESV, italics and underline added)

¹³ Godhead is a term coined in the KJV which should be translated as “divine nature or essence”. Godhead is not supposed to be understood as a divine essence of three deities. Most modern translations (HCSB, LEB, NASV, ESV, NET, MT) do not use the term “Godhead”.

The crucifixion and death of Jesus are not an afterthought but come from God's determined counsel and foreknowledge. God raised Jesus up and released him from the agony of death. Jesus did not rise from the dead by himself, but totally depended on God's power to raise him from the dead.

One of the major themes in Acts is "God raising Jesus from the dead":

Acts 3:15 "... *God raised* him from the dead ..."

Acts 4:10 "... Jesus Christ of Nazareth ... whom *God raised* from the dead ..."

Acts 5:30 "The *God* of our fathers *raised* Jesus ..."

Acts 10:40 "But *God raised* him on the third day ..."

Acts 13:30 "*God raised* him from the dead."

Acts 13:32-33 "... what *God* promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by *raising* Jesus ..."

Acts 13:34 "... *He raised* him from the dead, no more to return to corruption ..."

Acts 13:37 "But he whom *God raised* up did not see corruption."

Acts 17:30-31 "the times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because *He* has fixed a day on which *He* will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this *He* has given assurance to all by *raising* him from the dead."

Paul also preaches the same important message:

Galatians 1:1 “... *God* the Father, who *raised* him from the dead.”

Ephesians 1:20 “That He worked in Christ when *He raised* him from the dead ...”

Colossians 2:12 “... you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of *God*, who *raised* him from the dead.”

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 “... and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom He *raised* from the dead ...”

Romans 10:9 “And believe in your heart that *God raised* Jesus from the dead, you will be saved.”

The key point: The Gospel message is not just about the resurrection of Jesus, but that *it is God who raised Jesus* from the dead.

Point 3 – God works out His promise through David

Acts 2:25-28 “For David says concerning him, ‘I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have

made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.” (ESV)

In this section, Peter is citing from Psalm 16:8-11. As a prophet, David foresaw the future Messiah in his resurrection. David was speaking not of himself but of the Messiah.

Yahweh God had sworn to David that one of his descendants would sit on his Davidic throne.

Acts 2:29-32 “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did the flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.” (ESV, underline added)

Peter mentions specifically that David’s tomb was still with them. David died and was buried, and his body decayed in the tomb. In contrast, the promised Messiah, a human offspring descended from David’s line would be resurrected from the dead.

The word “descendant” in Greek is “ek karpou tēs osphyos autou”, which is literally translated as “out of the fruit of his loins.” Loin (*osphyos*) refers literally to the lower part of the physical body. God said to Abraham, “A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own *body (loins)*” (Gen 35:11). Kings will literally come out of Abraham’s seed. In like manner, “Jesus Christ

was made of the seed (*ek spermatos*) of David according to the flesh” (KJV, Rom 1:3).

Jesus comes directly from the family line of David. Like David, Jesus’ died, but unlike David, he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his physical body decay. The predicted Messiah overcame death.

The key point: God fulfilled His promise to David when He raised Jesus from the dead. The one who will sit on David’s throne is not God but a man born physically from the line of David.

Point 4 – God exalts Jesus to His right hand

Acts 2:33a “*Being therefore exalted* at the right hand of God.”
(ESV, italics added)

The verb ὑψωθείς (*hypsōtheis*, exalt, lift up) is in the passive voice. This is a divine passive because God is the One who performs the action. God exalted Jesus to heaven to sit at His right hand. Peter then cites another Psalm regarding the promised Messiah.

Acts 2:34-35 “For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, ‘The *Lord* said to my *Lord*, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’” (ESV, italics added)

There are two Lords here. One is the Lord. The other one is my Lord. Who is the first Lord and who is the second Lord? The answer is revealed in the Hebrew text.

Psalm 110:1 “The LORD says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool” (ESV)

In the Hebrew text, different words are used for “the LORD” and “my Lord”. The first LORD in Hebrew is יהוה (YHWH). The second Lord in Hebrew is אדוני (*adoni*) which refers to a supreme human lord who bears great authority. “YHWH” is the name of God whereas “adoni” is an honorary title of a human being.

(1) The first LORD, who is YHWH, is completely different from the second Lord who is a human lord. One is “the LORD” YHWH and the other one is “my lord” referring to David’s lord, someone greater than David. David is speaking prophetically about the human Messiah.

(2) Psalm 110 prophesies about the eventual status of the Messianic Lord who will be given this supreme office of authority. The Messiah is the one who is invited to sit at God’s right hand, a high place of honor, to act by God’s authority. In exalting Jesus to sit at His right hand, God is endorsing Jesus to be the Messiah.

(3) The promised Messiah needs to be both David’s lord (Acts 2:34) and David’s son, a descendant of David (v.30). Jesus once raised this question to the Pharisees, “If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?” (Mt 22:45) The Pharisees were not able to answer as they refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah although they knew Jesus

was a descendant of David. Jesus as the Messiah fulfilled both roles – David’s lord and David’s son.

Jesus’ exaltation

(1) Jesus is not regaining a position that he temporarily gave up. Rather, Jesus as the glorified man was exalted by God to this position of sitting at His right hand for the *first* time.

(2) Jesus is not replacing Yahweh as he is not taking the seat of Yahweh, but sits at His right hand.

(3) Sitting at God’s right hand does not mean that Jesus is equal to Yahweh, but that Jesus is given a new status as God’s emissary to act on God’s behalf.

(4) Jesus is now sitting at God’s right hand in his resurrected body. When Jesus was raised from the dead, his body was transformed into a glorious and imperishable body. Jesus did not change into a deity. Neither is Jesus a spirit sitting at the right hand of God. Jesus’ resurrected body is still a physical one. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples and they thought they “saw a spirit” (Lk 24:37), so Jesus asked them to “touch his hands and feet” for “a spirit does not have flesh and bones” (v. 39). Jesus was taken up to heaven in his resurrected body. “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). Jesus, the exalted man, will return in this glorious and imperishable body.

The key point: God endorsed Jesus as the Messiah when He exalted Jesus to sit at His right hand.

Point 5 – The promise of the Spirit is from the Father

Acts 2:33b “and *having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.*” (ESV, italics added)

(1) The verb λαβὼν (*labōn*) translated as “having received” is in the active voice which focuses on the action of receiving the Spirit from the Father. It was only at the exaltation that Jesus received the Spirit from the Father. Only then was he able to pour the Spirit onto the disciples.

(2) While Jesus was on earth, the Spirit could not be given to the disciples yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified (Jn 7:39). But one time after Jesus’ resurrection, he appeared to the disciples and breathed on them, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (Jn 20:22). Since Jesus had not yet been exalted to the Father’s right hand at this time, what would this action mean? This action took place after resurrection. Jesus connected this breathing of the Spirit to the power of forgiving sins and withholding the forgiveness of sins (v. 23). This could be a special anointing by Jesus to empower the core group of disciples with the Spirit to do God’s work. Jesus also instructed the disciples not to depart from Jerusalem, therefore it was

important for everyone to corporately “wait for the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4) to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

(3) This outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was an attestation that Yahweh had indeed exalted Jesus to sit at His right hand.

(4) The Spirit that is poured out is the Spirit of Yahweh. In the OT, the Spirit is often referred to as “the Spirit of Yahweh.” (Jdgs 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1Sam 10:6; 16:13, 14; 2Sam 23:2; 1Ki 18:12; 22:24; 2Ki 2:16; 2Chr 18:23; 20:14; Isa 11:2; 40:13; 61:1; 63:14; Ezek 11:5; 37:1; Mic 3:8)

(5) God chooses to pour out His Spirit richly *through* Jesus Christ (cf. Titus 3:5-6). Jesus, the one anointed by God, plays a crucial instrumental role in pouring God’s Spirit to the disciples. He has become the one through whom God anoints the disciples.

The key point: Jesus received the Spirit from the Father to pour onto the disciples at Pentecost. This action confirms that God had indeed exalted Jesus to sit at His right hand.

Point 6 – God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ

Acts 2:36 “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that *God has made him both Lord and Christ*, this Jesus whom you crucified.” (ESV, italics added)

The sermon reaches its climax — Yahweh has appointed Jesus to be the Lord (κύριος *kyrios* in Greek) and Christ (Χριστός *Christos* in Greek) for our salvation. These honorary titles were conferred on Jesus after the resurrection.

Jesus – the exalted Lord

What does it mean that God has made Jesus *kyrios*? *Kyrios* carries the meaning of ownership and authority. Yahweh is giving authority to Jesus to be His representative to rule as *kyrios*.

Jesus as Lord carries God’s authority. Jesus represents God. Jesus is ruling as God to us, but he is not God. By the same token, God made Moses *as God to Pharaoh* (Ex 7:1) and *as God to Aaron* (Ex 4:16). Moses was not God, but he represented God to Pharaoh and Aaron.

What is truly striking is that Yahweh delegates *all* His authority to Jesus to rule heaven and earth (Mt 28:18). Jesus as *kyrios* is now exercising the Lordship that inherently belongs only to Yahweh. For a long time, Yahweh was the sole ruler of all, and not even the angels shared in that rule.

This radical step by God is unprecedented in heaven. Jesus as *kyrios* rules to the extent that even “angels, authorities and powers are subjected to him” (1Pet 3:22). The prophets and the angels in heaven marveled and longed to look into the salvation that God unfolds through the suffering and glory of the Messiah (cf. 1Pet 1:10-12). What the prophets predicted came true in Jesus Christ and today we experience the

glorious salvation through Christ that the angels long to understand.

We are living in momentous times, a fact that many Christians are unaware of. “Many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see and did not see it and to hear what you hear and they did not hear it” (Mt 13:17; cf. 1Pet 1:10-12). We are now given the great privilege to see and hear what the prophets never experienced. If we could catch a vision of the glorious salvation program that God has in store for humanity, we would all be on fire for God.

Yahweh is not a high and lofty God who reigns alone. Jesus as the *firstborn* of the new creation is given the high privilege to rule with God as the exalted *kyrios*. Jesus had been tested and came through with humility in his perfect obedience to God. As the firstborn from the dead (Col 1:18; Rev 1:5), Jesus is the only man who has been raised from the dead and inaugurated to the heavenly throne before Yahweh.

Jesus as *kyrios* is totally distinct from Yahweh, the one God. It is biblically correct to understand the Lord Jesus as *the man of heaven* (1Cor 15:48-49). There is no suggestion in the Bible that being heavenly is to be a deity. Angels are heavenly beings created by God but they are not God. They worship God. Angels are mighty spiritual beings in heaven, yet we are instructed not to worship them (Rev 22:8-9). Jesus, the man of heaven, was raised to immortality which is positive proof that he never was the immortal God who alone has immortality in the first place.

Jesus as *kyrios* is exalted to the supreme role to rule, for which men were originally created for this purpose in the beginning (Gen 1:26-28; cf. Ps 8:4-8).

Jesus – the Messiah (Christ)

What does it mean that God has made Jesus *Christos*? *Christos* is the Greek translation of the Hebrew title מָשִׁיחַ (*mashiach*), “Messiah”, meaning “the anointed”.

In the OT, priests, kings, and prophets were *anointed* to do God’s work (Ex 28:41; 1Sam 10:1; 16:13; 1Ki 19:16, etc). These are all human agents of God’s *anointed*.

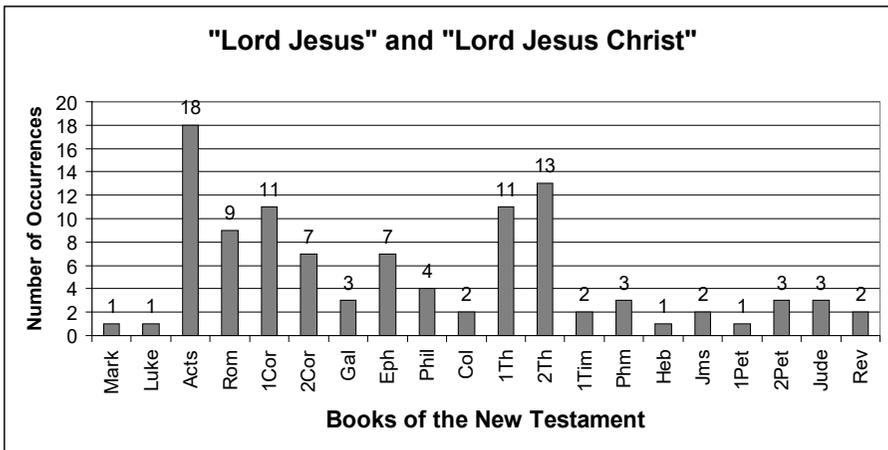
Jesus is the ultimate *Anointed One*, the one to fulfill the prophecy of the long awaited Messiah in the OT. The king Messiah is a human descendant from the line of David, and through this anointed agent, God will establish His Kingdom forever (2Sam 7:12-16).

The key point: God exalts Jesus to be Lord and Christ. As the exalted Lord and Messiah, Jesus is given all authority to rule heaven and earth on God’s behalf now and in the Kingdom to come.

“Lord Jesus Christ” in the NT

When Jesus was on earth, people would sometimes address him as “Lord” (Jn 8:11, 11:21, etc) or “Rabbi” (Jn 1:38, 49; 3:2; 6:25) in the Gospel accounts. These are polite titles of respect and reverence given to a master or teacher. It was only after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension that the title “Lord” takes on a *new* meaning as the “exalted Lord”.

In the New Testament, *kyrios* is mostly used as the exalted title for Jesus: *Lord* Jesus or *Lord* Jesus Christ.



“*Lord* Jesus” and “*Lord* Jesus Christ” combined have 104 occurrences in NT.¹⁴

1. “*Lord* Jesus” occurs only twice in the Gospel accounts, Mark and Luke, and only in the last chapters of these two

¹⁴ The statistics for the phrase “*Lord* Jesus” and “*Lord* Jesus Christ” are tabulated from Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB).

books. Mark speaks of Jesus as “Lord Jesus” after he had been taken up into heaven and had sat down at the right hand of God (Mk 16:19). In Luke, Jesus is addressed as “Lord Jesus” after his resurrection (Lk 24:3).

2. The Gospel narratives give an account of Jesus’ earthly life. When Jesus was on earth, he was not addressed as “Lord Jesus” or “Lord Jesus Christ” at all. Why? The exalted title “Lord” was given to Jesus only *after* His death and resurrection. In the gospel accounts of Jesus’ earthly life, he is called *Jesus* without any qualifying title.
3. Among the NT writers, Paul is the one who likes to address Jesus with his exalted title *Lord*. His epistles to the Thessalonians, totaling 24 occurrences, have the highest number of occurrences.
4. The book of Acts speaks of “believing on the *Lord Jesus Christ*” (Acts 11:17). Paul and Barnabas “risk their lives for the name of our *Lord Jesus Christ*” (15:26). The final words of Acts are “proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the *Lord Jesus Christ* with all boldness and without hindrance.” (28:31)
5. The message of the Gospel in Acts is that Jesus is *the Christ*.
 - Every day in the temple and from house to house, the apostles kept teaching and preaching that “Jesus is *the Christ*” (5:42).

- Paul confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that “Jesus was *the Christ*” (9:22).
 - In the synagogue in Thessalonica, Paul says, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is *the Christ*” (17:3).
 - When Paul was in Corinth, he testified to the Jews that “*the Christ* was Jesus” (18:5).
 - Apollos powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing from the Scriptures that “*the Christ* was Jesus” (18:28).
6. It is in “*Christ Jesus our Lord*” that we receive the free gift of eternal life from God (Rom 6:23). Nothing can separate us from the love of God in “*Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Rom 8:39). Through “*our Lord Jesus Christ*,” God grants us victory over the sting of death and the power of sin (1Cor 15:55-57).

Lord Jesus Christ

Today we have been so used to hearing “Lord Jesus Christ” that the entire name with the titles does not strike us anymore. There is great authority in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are sanctified and justified “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1Cor 6:11).

Jesus is known as “Lord Jesus” or “Jesus Christ” or “Lord Jesus Christ” or “Lord Christ” or “Christ the Lord”.

(1) The Jewish church in the 1st century understood Jesus the Messiah as Lord, never as God. It was only later in the 2nd and 3rd centuries that people did not distinguish *kyrios* as applied to God and *kyrios* as applied to Jesus in the NT, leading to the error of equating “Lord Jesus” to “Lord God”.

(2) In the NT, the “Lord God” is always Yahweh and never Jesus (Lk 1:32, 68; Rev 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 18:8; 19:6; 21:22; 22:5,6). Jesus is never called “God the Lord”. We need to be clear on the identity of Jesus. Jesus is “Christ the Lord” (Lk 2:11).

(3) Believing that *Jesus is Lord and Jesus is Christ* is crucial to salvation. But today the Gospel message has erroneously shifted to require people to believe that the “Jesus is God” for their salvation. There is no such proclamation in the New Testament.

(4) The NT gospel message is to confess that Jesus is Lord and Jesus is Christ. Any other confession will result in distorting the gospel of Christ (Gal 1:7) and in danger of preaching “another Jesus” (2Cor 11:4) of which Paul had forewarned.

(5) Paul explicitly says that there is one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ (1Cor 8:6). The one God is the Father whose name is Yahweh and the one Lord is Jesus Christ. The line is drawn clearly in distinguishing the one God from the one Lord. Jesus Christ is Lord.

(6) Strikingly, in the Gospel narratives, Jesus does not refer himself as God. There is no “God Jesus” or “God Christ” in the NT. Jesus is the exalted Lord, the Messiah.

Requirements for Salvation

Repent

After listening to Peter’s powerful sermon, the people were cut to the heart and asked, “Brothers what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37)

Acts 2:38a And Peter said to them, “*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” (ESV, italics added)

The Greek word μετανοέω (*metanoēō*), to repent, means “to change one’s mind and purpose thoroughly”. A sincere remorse over sin is not enough as it is not a matter of regretting, but making a profound change to turn away from sin. Repentance is breaking away from the old habit of living in sins and turning to God.

Call out to God in repentance. You have many sins in your life. Confess your sins to God. Call out to God to seek forgiveness. Go and make restitutions for the wrongs you have done to others.

Call out to God to give you the courage to reconcile with God and with others. Humble yourself and call out to God.

Do not be afraid. God will give you strength to deal with all your secret sins that no one knows. Expose yourself to God and cry out to God from the depths of your heart to receive God's mercies. Apply the teaching in Joel to weep, lament and mourn for your sins.

Call out to God in brokenness with a contrite heart to receive forgiveness. Only with true forgiveness from God will your inner being be set free from the bondage of sins.

Finish with your old life and make a complete 180 degree turnaround to commit your life to love God so as to live a life of holiness in God's power. If you call yourself a Christian, have you made this radical step of *metanoēō* in your life?

Be baptized

Baptism is required for salvation. Repentance and getting baptized go together.

When I first received the Gospel, I was told that getting baptized is optional for a Christian. But in the early church, after a person repents, the person gets baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Far from baptism being an option, it is required for salvation to have all your sins forgiven. Jesus said, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God" (Jn 3:5). A born again Christian repents and receives water baptism and the Spirit.

The Greek word βαπτισθήτω (*baptisthētō*) be baptized – the verb is in the aorist tense, imperative mood, and passive voice. The imperative mood signifies a command that needs

to be obeyed. Baptism is crucial for salvation. The verb is passive, which means that the person cannot baptize himself, but needs to get baptized by a servant of God.

When we get baptized, we are making a covenant with God by entering into a union with Christ. We enter into a covenant with Christ. We are joined to Christ at baptism.

- (1) To be baptized into Christ is to be united with Christ in his death and his life (Rom 6:3-5). In the immersion into water, we die with Christ and we are buried with him. We die and bury the old way of life. When we rise up from the water, we are raised up with him through faith in the powerful working of God (Col 2:12). We become a new person in Christ.
- (2) To be baptized into Christ also means to put on Christ (Gal 3:27), to live the new life in obedience to do God's will. We live as a new man in Christ.
- (3) We are so united "with Christ" (Rom 6:8; 8:17; 15:5; 1Cor 12:12; Gal 2:20; Eph 2:5; Phil 1:23; Col 2:20; 3:1; Rev 20:4) that our life is hidden with Christ in Yahweh God (Col 3:3).

This act of baptism expresses our covenant with Yahweh God. We commit our lives to love Yahweh with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength. We commit our lives to live under the Lordship of Jesus and become his disciple.

Baptism was conducted in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 10:48; 19:5). “In the name of Jesus” should not be understood as a formula. “In the name of Jesus” carries the meaning of *by the authority or power of* the person. The apostles acted under the power and authority of Jesus when they used Jesus’ name. If a person does not live under the authority of Jesus, he should not use the name of Jesus.

Jesus’ authority was given to him by God the Father (Mt 28:18-19). When the early disciples acted in the authority of Jesus’ name, they were fully aware of acting in the name of the Father. Jesus always functioned in the name of the Father (Jn 5:43; 10:25). Similarly, when the disciples functioned in the name of Jesus, they also functioned in the name of the Father.

Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:38b “and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
(ESV)

The imparting of the Spirit is vital for our salvation. When a person gets baptized, he needs to make the conscious effort to ask God to give him His Spirit. You don’t have because you don’t ask. Call out to God to give you His Spirit. A Christian is one who has the Spirit of God dwelling in him.

(1) God’s Spirit is crucial for our salvation

On one occasion, the Samaritans had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, but did not receive the Spirit immediately (Acts 8:16). Receiving God’s Spirit is necessary

for salvation, so Peter and John were sent to pray for them. The Spirit was then imparted to the Samaritans through the apostles' laying on of hands (v.17).

On another occasion, there was a group of disciples in Ephesus who had received only John's baptism. The first question Paul asked them was: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2). What is puzzling is that these disciples professed to have believed, yet had no knowledge of the Holy Spirit. Paul then baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus (v.5) and imparted the Holy Spirit to them through the laying on of hands (v.6).

(2) The Holy Spirit is God's gift to His people

Yahweh is the one who gives the Spirit (Acts 15:8; 1Cor 2:12; 2Cor 5:5; 1Thes 4:8; 1Jn 3:24; 4:13) to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32).

(3) God gives us the Spirit as a "pledge" (2Cor 5:5)

The Greek word for pledge is ἀρραβών (*arrabōn*) which can be translated as "a first installment" (MIT) or "a deposit" (NIV). The giving of God's Spirit is a "down payment" (HCSB) with a guarantee of more to come.

We are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when we first believe in the Gospel (Eph 1:13). In giving us the Spirit, God anoints us, seals us, and gives us a guarantee of His pledge to us. The gift of the Spirit is the guarantee or down payment (2Cor 1:22) of our inheritance (Eph 1:14)

(4) The Spirit is the defining mark of the Christian

“You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit” (Rom 8:9). All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Rom 8:14). Be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18; cf. Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9, 52).

(5) The Spirit is given to you to function in the Body

The gift of the Spirit is *not* for your own personal possession but so that you are incorporated into the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:13 “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” (ESV)

Some Christians live a defeated life because they want to possess the Spirit for their own personal gain and salvation. The Spirit is not given for that purpose. A Christian gets baptized into the body of Christ in order to drink of one Spirit. The Spirit is given to the Christian so that he can function as a member of the body of Christ.

Being a member of the body of Christ is not equivalent to being a member of the church. To be on the list of church membership can be nominal in that it is simply an identity within a church group or organization.

Being a member of the body of Christ transforms our inner being because each member lives for the other members of the body. The hand does not live for itself but for the leg, the mouth, and the other members of the body (cf. 1Cor 12:20-27). The Spirit enables us to live out the body life in the Church. The members are integrated with one another to

work in harmony for the oneness of the body. We are responsible for one another. We love one another as ourselves as we take care of each other to keep the body healthy, active, and functioning.

When I got baptized, I was told that I would become a member of the church in the sense of joining the church membership. The church membership was strictly personal and did not require me to be responsible for the other people on the membership list. I didn't even know the name of the person sitting next to me, in front of me or behind me during church worship. Church attendance and joining activities were the measuring sticks of the Christian life rather than a new transformed life that is totally committed to God and to one another in the body life.

In the church that my husband and I have shepherded in the last 30+ years, we do not require people to join church membership but we do nurture each baptized member to participate actively in the body life, to love God and love one another as ourselves. When we take communion, each member participates actively in one another's life for each other's edification. The members know one another not just by name but are united deeply in prayer and in building up the body life together. Only in this way do we experience the movement of the Spirit corporately in our lives.

Ask the Father for the Holy Spirit

In the new covenant, Yahweh opens up a new path for all His children to ask Him for the gift of the Spirit. Even though God is so desirous to give the Spirit to His children, they still need to ask for the Spirit.

Luke 11:13 “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.” (ESV, underline added).

The Greek word for “ask” is *aitousin*. This is a present participle in the active mood. It would be more correct to translate it as “how much more willing is the heavenly Father who is in heaven to give the Holy Spirit to those who are *asking* him.” The active present participle means that the action of asking is continuous.

Keep calling out to God and ask for God’s Spirit to constantly fill you. The Father is more than willing to give His Spirit to His children who ask. God will not force His Spirit on you. When you keep asking, you will live in the Spirit and bear fruit that abides in your life.

Drink from the fountain of living water

The asking for the Spirit has to do with the Spirit actively *moving* in your life.

John 7:37-39a On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him *come to me* and *drink*. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will *flow rivers of living water*.’” Now this he said about *the Spirit*, whom those who believed in him were to receive. (ESV, italics added).

God’s Spirit empowers us and transforms our lives, out of which flow rivers of living water.

(1) Jesus speaks of the Spirit as living water. When the Spirit works in our lives, we are transformed. Living water works in a remarkable way. Living water cleanses. Living water moves. Living water heals.

(2) Are you thirsty? A thirsty man is a focused man because he will look for water to quench his thirst. Jesus said, “Come to me and drink”. You do not get the filling of God’s Spirit automatically. You need to go to Jesus and drink.

(3) Why Jesus? Jesus takes you to drink from the fountain of life. Yahweh is the fountain of living water (Jer 17:13). Call to Yahweh. Drink! Don’t just take one sip. Those who are thirsty will drink.

(4) Drink daily. This is how I get renewed day by day. Moving water is fresh. Walk daily in the freshness of the Spirit that comes from Yahweh. Ask God to fill you with His Spirit. The Spirit flows from God into our hearts like a river.

(5) We don't drink our own water but from God's fountain. The water from God transforms us. Our water goes out to others. Get refreshed by God so that you can refresh others.

(6) Notice the word "flow". It is not drops of water trickling out but *rivers* of water gushing out from you. As you drink, let the Spirit move in your life so that you become a channel of blessing to others. Let the power of God flow through us.

By God's grace, may the water that flows out from us satisfy thirsty and weary souls in the world. *Call to Father Yahweh* to ask for His Spirit to move through your life unhindered.

Draw water from Yahweh

Isaiah 12:2-4 "Behold, God is my *salvation*; I will trust, and will not be afraid for YH YHWH is my strength and my song, and he has become my *salvation*. With joy you will draw *water* from the wells of *salvation*. And you will say in that day: '*Give thanks to YHWH, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted.*'" (ESV, YHWH restored, italics added)

(1) Yahweh God is our salvation. Yahweh saves us. Call on Yahweh and experience His salvation.

(2) The repetition of God's Name YH YHWH denotes emphasis (YH is the short form of YHWH). Have confidence in Yahweh. Behold, Yahweh is our salvation! With joy, we draw water from the wells of salvation.

(3) There is something that we need to do. Draw. We need to *draw* just like we need to *drink*.

(4) You don't experience God's salvation in a passive way. Ask the Father. Call on Yahweh. Draw and drink. Keep drawing and keep drinking from the wells of salvation (Isa 12:3).

Isaiah 58:11 “And YHWH will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong, and you shall be like a *watered garden*, like a *spring of water*, whose *waters do not fail*. (ESV, YHWH restored; italics added)

What a precious promise this is! When we call out to Yahweh God, He satisfies us with living water so that we can become a watered garden like a spring of water whose waters *do not fail*. Not only does it quench the thirsty souls, it becomes a spring of water welling up to eternal life (Jn 4:14).

Keep drawing and keep drinking. I have counseled many Christians who often complain to me that their spiritual lives are dry and barren. When the well runs dry, stop all activities.

Call to Yahweh and drink the living water from God's fountain to live a vibrant life in the Spirit. Become a spring of water that brings others to the fountain of life.

God Pours out His Spirit

Acts 2:17-18 “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that *I will pour out my Spirit* on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions,

and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days *I will pour out my Spirit*, and they shall prophesy.” (ESV, italics added)

In the event at Pentecost, Peter quotes the prophecy of Joel to highlight the gracious act of God in the liberal pouring of His Spirit. Call out to God to pour His Spirit onto you. Twice, God says that He will pour out His Spirit. The Greek word ἐκχέω (*ekcheō*) for “pour out” has the meaning of “bestowing liberally” or “distributing largely” (TDNT).

(1) The action of *pouring* carries a sense of magnitude and richness. God is ever so willing to pour His Spirit on us to fill us to such an extent that His Spirit *overflows* from our lives and we are full of the Spirit. What a great promise this is! God grants us His gift in overabundance!

In Acts, the result of the outpouring of God’s Spirit is that the disciples are constantly filled with the Spirit.

Acts 2:4 “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit ...”

Acts 4:8 “Then Peter, filled with the Spirit, said to them ...”

Acts 4:31b “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness”

Acts 9:17b “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 13:9 “But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him.”

Acts 13:52 “And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”

While the outpouring of the Spirit is an exciting event, the ongoing experience of being filled with God’s Spirit is necessary in the life of a Christian. Some Christians have the wrong idea that the filling of the Spirit is like going to a gas station to fill up the tank full every time the gas is consumed to the empty mark. The filling of the Spirit does not work that way.

Eph 5:18 “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.”

Paul exhorts the Ephesian Christians to be filled with the Spirit all the time. The Greek verb “be filled” πληροῦσθε (*plērousthe*) is in the present tense, imperative mood, and passive voice. The passive voice indicates that you cannot fill yourself. God is the one who fills you. The imperative is a command, therefore it is not optional. The filling is in the present tense which means that the filling is an *ongoing* process. You do not “top up” the filling of the Spirit like you “top up” your wallet.

Paul compares the filling of the Spirit to being drunk with wine. When a person is drunk, he is controlled by the wine. In like manner, when a person is filled with the Spirit, he is controlled by the Spirit. He lives according to the Spirit as he sets his mind of the things of the Spirit (Rom 8:5). This is how we “walk by the Spirit” (Gal 5:16), “live by the Spirit” (v. 25), “keep in step with the Spirit” (v. 25), and “sow to the Spirit (6:8) all the time. Being filled with the Spirit is not a matter of

how much more you are getting from the Spirit, but whether the Spirit is in control of your life, empowering you unhindered. The filling of the Spirit is a steady process that does not stop but continues to overflow in your life every day.

Let your mind be renewed by the fresh wind of the Spirit every day. Call on Yahweh God to always fill you with His Spirit so that you consistently produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). The Spirit of God works steadily in our lives through the continual filling so that we grow in love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentles and self-control. When a person is in that state, he is “full of the Spirit”.

Acts 6:3 “Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, *full of the Spirit* and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

Acts 6:5 “And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man *full of faith and of the Holy Spirit ...*”

Acts 7:55 “But he, *full of the Holy Spirit*, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.”

Acts 11:24 “For he was a good man, *full of the Holy Spirit* and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.”

When a man is full of the Spirit is, he is also full of faith to do God’s work. We cannot live a day without the filling of the Spirit. When the Spirit fills us, he anoints us to the full. I always humbly ask for the filling of the Spirit every day to do God’s will and accomplish the assignments given to me.

(2) When the Spirit of Yahweh overflows in our lives, the effect is so great that even the dry desolate wilderness can turn into a fruitful field and become a forest.

Isaiah 32:15 “until the *Spirit is poured* upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.” (ESV, italics added)

The pouring of the Spirit is from on high, meaning that it comes from Yahweh.

The pouring dramatically changes a wilderness into a flourishing forest. A wilderness is barren and unfruitful. A few years ago, we took our church brethren to walk through the wilderness of Israel. The Negev desert was dry and the ground brittle. All that the wilderness produced were briars and thorns. The harsh and barren wasteland remains vividly in my mind. But when God’s Spirit is poured out and powerfully works in us, even such dry brittle ground can produce streams of water. What a miracle! The desolate place can come to life. The barren land can blossom into a rich and flourishing forest. Can you sense the excitement of what God’s Spirit can do through us in this dry and barren world?

Call out to God to pour His Spirit onto you to transform the world through you.

(3) In Acts, the outpouring of the Spirit is not a one-time event in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. Soon afterwards, the Gentiles in other places also experienced the pouring of the Spirit (Acts 10:45; cf. Acts 11:15; 19:6). The

early churches were established in the anointing and fullness of God's Spirit.

It is God's intention that the church becomes a prophetic community with the empowering of His Spirit. In this age of the church and the Spirit, we are called to be a people who function in the anointing of God's Spirit. Visions and dreams are given to young and old. Everyone regardless of age, gender and status, can receive direct revelations from God and so become messengers of Yahweh.

God wants to pour His Spirit onto us. Let's call out to God to fill us full with His Spirit to prophesy to this generation.

(4) Acts 2 foreshadows the mission of the Church to all nations. After Pentecost, the apostles carried the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome. Before the age of the church closes, the Church has a mission to fulfill. Not only do we bring the Gospel to "all nations" (Mt 24:14) but we also need to "make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19) before the end comes.

The Greek word for nations is ἔθνος (*ethnos*) from which the English word "ethnicity" is derived. We need to cross racial barriers and cultural differences to proclaim the Gospel. When all the tribes of the world are reached, the end will come. Let us go forward to *keep calling out to God* to fill us full with His Spirit to finish the unfinished task before the end comes.

Salvation in Yahweh and Jesus

Acts 2:21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who *calls* upon the name of the Lord *shall be saved*. (ESV, italics added)

With a clearer understanding of the message at Pentecost regarding how God works out His salvation plan through the Lord Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit, we are now in a better position to grasp what it means to call on the name of the Lord for our salvation.

Call

The Greek word for “call” is ἐπικαλέσεται (*epikalesētai*) which carries the meaning of “to put a name on, to cry out, to call upon, to invoke, and to appeal” (TDNT). Here the verb is in aorist tense, subjunctive mood, and middle voice.

(1) The aorist tense means that the action could take place in past, present or future. There is no English equivalent for this Greek tense. Aorist is a “simple occurrence” or “summary occurrence” without regard for the amount of time that it takes to accomplish the action. The tense is viewed as a single collective whole. The action of calling may take place at one point in time (past tense) but also over a period of time into the future.

(2) The subjunctive mood means that the action carries a probable result.

(3) The middle voice indicates that the person who is doing the calling is acting on his own behalf.

To experience God's salvation, we need to respond to God by "calling". We are not to be passive. God gives us the free will to call Him in our own initiative.

Shall be Saved

The Greek word for "shall be saved" is σωθήσεται (*sōthēsetai*) meaning "saved, healed, made whole or delivered from danger" (TDNT). The word is in the passive voice, future tense, and indicative mood.

(1) The passive voice emphasizes that the action is something done to us. We are the recipients of the action. We cannot save ourselves.

(2) The verb tense is future. We anticipate and look forward to the final salvation to take place. Salvation is an ongoing process. We are saved, being saved, and will be saved.

(3) The indicative mood indicates assertion or presentation of certainty.

The NT speaks of three tenses in salvation: was saved, being saved and will be saved. We were saved (Rom 8:24); we are being saved (1Cor 1:18); and we will be saved when we endure to the end (Mt 24:13). Those who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. Salvation in the NT is not "once saved always saved". Those who have been saved must endure faithfully to

the end for their final salvation. We need to make a start to call on the name of the Lord and to continue calling on the name of the Lord for final salvation.

Yahweh and Jesus are Saviors

Who is our Savior? In the context of the passage which quotes Joel, Yahweh God is the One who saves. The prophecy of Joel is partly fulfilled at Pentecost where Peter explains that God is the One who works out His salvation plan through Jesus the Messiah. Jesus the exalted Lord also saves.

Both Yahweh and Jesus are Saviors. Paul understands the roles of God and Jesus very well as he tells Titus: God our Savior saves through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Titus 3:4-6 “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God (Yahweh) our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.” (ESV, underline added).

Both God and Jesus Christ are Saviors but their roles are different.

(1) Yahweh as Savior is the one actively performing the saving work: God saves us not because of our works but according to His mercy. God does the work in the washing of regeneration. God renews us with His Spirit. God pours out His Spirit richly onto us. God chooses to pour His Spirit *through* Jesus Christ.

(2) Jesus Christ is the channel which God uses to save us, therefore Jesus Christ is also our Savior.

(3) The source of salvation originates from Yahweh.

Yahweh as Savior

Yahweh as Savior is a theme that threads through the OT.

Isaiah 43:3a “For *I am Yahweh* your God, the Holy One of Israel, *your Savior*.”

Isaiah 43:11 “I, *I am Yahweh*, and besides me there is no *savior*.”

Isaiah 45:15 “Truly, you are a God who hides himself, *O God of Israel, the Savior*.”

Isaiah 45:21 “... Was it not *I, Yahweh*? And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and *a Savior*; there is none besides me.”

Isaiah 49:26 “... Then all flesh shall know that *I am Yahweh your Savior*, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

Isaiah 60:16 “you shall know that *I, Yahweh, am your Savior* and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

Hosea 13:4 “But *I am Yahweh* your God from the land of Egypt, you know no God but me, and besides me there is no *savior*.”

(The above verses are taken from ESV, YHWH restored)

In the New Testament, “God our Savior” is used in the following passages:

1 Timothy 1:1 “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of *God our Savior* ...”

1 Timothy 2:3-4 “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of *God our Savior* who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

1 Timothy 4:10 “... we have our hope set on the living *God*, who is *the Savior* of all people, especially of those who believe.”

Titus 1:3 “... I have been entrusted by the command of *God our Savior*.”

Titus 2:10 “... so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of *God our Savior*.”

Jude 1:25 “To the only *God our Savior*, through Jesus Christ our Lord ...”

Jesus Christ as Savior

Jesus Christ as Savior is mostly used by Peter in his second epistle:

2 Peter 1:1 “... To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and *Savior Jesus Christ*.”

2 Peter 1:11 “... an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and *Savior Jesus Christ*.”

2 Peter 2:20 “For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and *Savior Jesus Christ ...*”

2 Peter 3:18 “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and *Savior Jesus Christ ...*”

2 Peter 3:2 “That you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and *Savior* through your apostles.”

Paul also mentions Jesus Christ as our Savior:

Ephesians 5:23 “... *Christ* is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its *Savior*.”

Titus 1:4 “Grace and peace from God the Father and *Christ Jesus our Savior*.”

Titus 2:13 “Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and *Savior Jesus Christ*.”

2 Timothy 1:10 “And which now has been manifested through the appearing of our *Savior Christ Jesus ...*”

Yahweh saves through Jesus

Both Yahweh and Jesus are our Saviors. Yahweh is our ultimate Savior.

(1) Yahweh is the Father who “*sent* his Son to be the Savior of the world.” (1Jn 4:14)

(2) Yahweh is the One who exalted Jesus “at his right hand as Leader and Savior.” (Acts 5:31)

(3) “*God has brought* to Israel a Savior, Jesus.” (Acts 13:23)

Yahweh our ultimate Savior saves through Jesus Christ, who is also our Savior.

The Name of the Lord

Acts 2:21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (ESV)

Joel 2:32 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of YHWH shall be saved. (ESV, YHWH restored)

Acts 2:21 is a citation of Joel 2:32. The original Hebrew text has to do with calling on the name of YHWH for salvation. Peter as a Jew would have been reluctant to vocalize the Name YHWH when he cited this text publicly. Ever since the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile in the 6th century BCE, they were afraid of misusing God’s Name. They began the tradition of substituting God’s Name by calling God “Adonai” (“Lord” in Hebrew). This is contrary to the pre-exilic practices. The Jews stopped vocalizing the Name after the exile. God’s Name YHWH was not vocalized anymore in public. This was the historical situation at the time of the apostle Peter in the 1st century CE.

Another consideration is that in the 3rd BCE, Greek became the common language of the Hellenistic world. It became

necessary for the Hebrew Bible to be translated into Greek, later known as the Septuagint, LXX. The rabbis translated “YHWH” as *kyrios*. If Peter quoted Joel 2:32 from the LXX, he would have used the word *kyrios* which means “Lord”. Even though *kyrios* was used, the Jews in the 1st century were aware that *kyrios* was a placeholder word for YHWH. It is beyond doubt that Peter had the calling of the name of YHWH in mind when he quoted from Joel.

Given the entire context of the sermon at Pentecost, could Peter also have in mind that the calling on the name of *kyrios* here is referring to Jesus?

- (1) In the entire sermon message, Peter explains how Yahweh God saves through Jesus and exalted him to sit at His right hand as Lord (Acts 2:34).
- (2) The thrust of the message at Pentecost is that God has made Jesus *Lord* and *Christ* (Acts 2:36). The Greek word *kyrios* (Lord) occurs seven times in the sermon (2:20, 21, 25, 34, 34, 36, 39). Most of the time *kyrios* refers to Yahweh, but it is used specifically of Jesus in Acts 2:34 (“my Lord”) and Acts 2:36.
- (3) Peter wishes to drive home the point to let the house of Israel “*know for certain*” (*asphalōs*) that God has made Jesus both *Lord* and *Christ*. The Greek word *asphalōs* means “safely, securely, assuredly, with certainty, firmly, steadfastly” (TDNT). It is with firm assurance that Jesus is both Lord and Christ.

In the sermon, Peter was careful to expound that God is the One who performs the work of salvation in Jesus and through Jesus. The eternal principle of calling on the Name of Yahweh for our salvation always holds true because Yahweh is the One who saves. At the same time, Peter is focusing on God making Jesus to be *Lord*. The entire sermon is to let the house of Israel know with firm certainty that Jesus Christ is Lord.

We call on the name of Jesus
upon the foundation by which
Yahweh has made Jesus Lord for our salvation.

Yahweh saves us through Jesus. Both Yahweh and Jesus are Saviors. Ultimately, it is Yahweh who saves.

Jesus is the head of the Church

We call on Jesus as Lord because he is the head of the Church. As *kyrios*, Jesus is now the exalted *Lord* acting in God's authority in heaven. Yahweh God has conferred on Jesus the authority to rule as *head* of the church.

Listen to the excitement in Paul's heart as he writes to the Ephesians regarding God's work in exalting Jesus to be *head* of the Church.

Ephesians 1:17–19 “that the God (Yahweh) of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he (Yahweh) has called you, what are the riches of his

glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his (Yahweh's) power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might." (ESV, parentheses and underline added)

Can you see the marvelous work of Yahweh God? This is too magnificent! A wonder to behold! Then Paul continues:

Ephesians 1:20–23 “And that he (Yahweh) worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And he (Yahweh) put all things under his (Jesus') feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (ESV, parentheses and underline added)

- (1) Yahweh God is the One who works in Jesus: raised him, seated him at His right hand, put all things under his feet, and finally gave him as *head* over all things to the church.
- (2) Jesus as the head of the Church is the Leader of the Church who leads and guides the Church by the Spirit.
- (3) We tend to think of the head as a tyrannical authoritarian position. In biblical understanding, the head exercises the authority to lead people in the ways of God.

In the OT, Yahweh acts as their “head” (ESV, LEB, NASV, NIV Micah 2:13). The Hebrew word for “head”

is *רֹשֶׁת* (*rosh*), which carries the meaning that Yahweh is their leader (HCSB). Yahweh as the head is the one who leads by standing before them as well as behind them as their rear guard (Isa 52:12). It is similar to the Exodus journey during which the pillar of cloud moved before them yet also stood behind them (Ex 14:19). As head of Israel, Yahweh leads the way for the Israelites to go forward, and He also protects them from the enemies lurking behind them. Jesus, as the head of the Church, also leads in the same manner for his body. When I shepherd God's people, I also lead the sheep in front of them, but more so behind them in the last few years because of the dire need to safeguard the sheep from the enemies.

The early church called on the name of Jesus. Why? Jesus is the head of the Church (Eph 5:23; Col 1:18). And the head of Christ is God (1Cor 11:3). The Church submits to Christ as Christ submits to God.

Jesus is Lord of the Church

We call on Jesus as our Lord because Jesus, the *head* of the church, is *Lord* of the church.

1 Corinthians 1:2 “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our *Lord* Jesus Christ, both *their Lord* and *ours*.” (ESV, underline and italics added).

The early church called on the name of the Lord Jesus because they recognized that God has conferred the Lordship on Jesus. They call on the name of Jesus because Jesus is “their Lord”.

In the *Sitz im Leben* (“setting in life”) of the early church, the disciples were identified as “those who call on the name” (Acts 9:14, 21; 22:16). The apostles acted in Jesus’ authority when they called on the name of Jesus. Jesus’ authority comes from God. Ultimately, it is God who gives the authority when the name of Jesus is used.

A chain of command to follow

God → Lord Jesus Christ → Church

(1) God – The head of Christ

Lord Jesus submits to the Lordship of Yahweh God.

(2) Christ – The head of the Church

The church submits to the Lordship of Christ.

Church → submits to Christ → submits to God

Today, God rules the Church through the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as Christ lives in obedience to God (head of Christ), we live in obedience to Christ (head of the Church). When we live in obedience to Christ, we also live in obedience to God for God is above all.

Always keep in mind the following two important points regarding *the relationship of Jesus to his Father*:

- (1) Jesus has a *Lord* above him whom he calls Father. “I thank you *Father, Lord* of heaven and earth” (Mt 11:25).
- (2) Jesus also has a *God* above him whom he calls Father. “*Father* the hour has come ... and this is eternal life that they may know you *the only true God*” (Jn 17:1, 3).

Yahweh is the *Lord* and *God* of Jesus Christ. Today, Jesus as *head* of the church is God’s representative to rule as *Lord* in the church. Our submission to Jesus expresses our submission to Yahweh.

When we call on the name of the Lord Jesus,
Jesus directs us to Yahweh who is all in all.

Live under the Lordship of God and Jesus

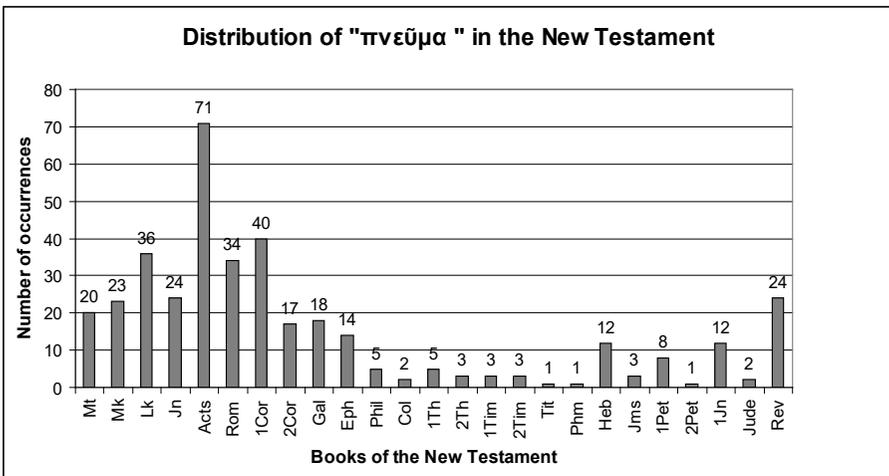
Calling on the name of the Lord is a lifestyle of living under the Lordship of God and Jesus. If Jesus is not Lord of your life, what benefit is there to calling on the name of Jesus? Similarly, if Yahweh is not your God, what benefit is there to calling on the name of YHWH? Make it your daily goal to live in obedience to God and to Jesus.

The outpouring of God’s Spirit in Acts 2 is the beginning of a new page in history in which God’s Spirit is made available to the body of Christ with Jesus as the head. The focus of the outpouring of God’s Spirit is not just on individuals but on the corporate community of God’s people functioning in the Spirit.

We are living in the age of the Church and the Spirit of God. Not only does each individual call on the name of the Lord, but the church as a whole calls on the name of the Lord corporately to live out the life of the Kingdom. Through the empowering of the Spirit, we manifest the reality of the Kingdom in the body life.

We call on the Lord for the Empowering of the Spirit

We call on Yahweh and the Lord Jesus to empower us with the Spirit to advance God’s Kingdom. The following statistical bar chart shows the distribution of *πνεῦμα* (*pneuma*) in the New Testament.¹⁵



Acts has the highest frequency with 71 occurrences of *pneuma*. *Pneuma* is a key word of Acts.

“The Spirit” in Greek is in the neuter form meaning that the Spirit is referred to as “it” and is not a masculine form “he”. The Athanasian Creed claims that the Holy Spirit is God which resulted in the translators reading a masculine “he” for the Spirit. The definition of *pneuma* is “a movement of air, of

¹⁵ The statistics for *πνεῦμα* are tabulated from the Greek New Testament, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Nestle-Aland 27th edition.

the wind; a breath” (TDNT). Read the New Testament again with the correct understanding of the Spirit. Do not read the Spirit as a separate person by himself. You will be able to see for yourself that the Spirit refers to God’s Spirit.

The Spirit belongs to God. Even though it is neuter, the Spirit from God is personable. We can grieve the Spirit (Eph 4:30). The Spirit is God’s breath. We can feel the powerful movement of God like wind. The Spirit is not a separate entity of its own but is God’s Spirit moving in our lives. Simply put, the Spirit is God’s power in action. Jesus always functions in the power of God’s Spirit (Lk 4:14).

The book of Acts portrays how God’s Spirit empowers the disciples to advance God’s Kingdom in building up communities of churches. This book has always been my life manual all these years in shepherding the church. Just as God’s Spirit worked so powerfully in the life of the early church, the Spirit of God can move in the same way today in our churches.

When God pours His Spirit to fill us full, He empowers us. Do we have the faith to call on the Lord to empower us with His Spirit so that the life of God is dynamically manifested through our churches?

The Spirit empowers us to Witness

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive *power* when the *Holy Spirit* has come upon you, and you will be *my witnesses* in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (ESV, italics added)

Call on the Lord to empower us with the Spirit to witness. When the Spirit is in action, there is power. We are called to be witnesses for Christ. The Greek word for “witnesses” is μάρτυς (*martys*) from which the English word “martyr” is derived. To be a witness for Christ is to be a martyr. This is only possible when we surrender ourselves to let the Spirit of God transform us from glory to glory. Many early apostles suffered martyrdom because they did not shrink back under severe persecutions.

Stephen

Stephen is a person empowered with the Spirit to be a witness of Jesus. “The blood of your martyr” was a term Paul used to describe Stephen (Acts 22:20).

Three times, Stephen’s life is described as “full of the Spirit” (Acts 6:3, 5; 7:55). After he was selected to be one of the seven to serve tables (Acts 6:2-3), he also exercised “the ministry of the *word*” (v.4) such that his listeners “could not withstand the wisdom and the *Spirit* with which he was *speaking*” (v.10). Stephen was not even an apostle but one who served tables in the Jerusalem church.

When the Spirit of God filled him, he spoke the word so powerfully that “all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15).

Stephen’s life was short but intense. The power of the Spirit flowed out of him with no trace of bitterness in the face of dire hostility. The raging council “stopped their ears” (Acts 7:57) and rushed out with one purpose: they “cast him out of the

city and stoned him” (v. 58). A person who is full of the Spirit has a powerful presence of God in him and he has no fear.

As the enemies stoned Stephen, he called out to Jesus, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59; cf. Lk 23:46). And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (Acts 7:60; cf. Lk 23:34). It always amazes me that Stephen sees Jesus “standing” at the right hand of God at his martyrdom (Acts 7:55-56). It is as if Luke was trying to make a significant point as the “standing” is repeated twice, once in his narration and once from Stephen’s mouth. This is the only place in which Jesus is found standing at the right hand of God. Often times, Jesus is in a seated position. Know that when the time comes for us to face martyrdom, Jesus is there to strengthen us to receive us.

Stephen was a true follower of Jesus. Like master, like disciple.

Martyrdom did not stop the witness of those who lost their lives for God in the early Church. Stephen’s martyrdom left a deep mark in Paul (Acts 7:58; 8:1; 22:20), who later on also became a martyr for Christ. Church tradition says that Paul was beheaded under Nero’s cruel persecution after the great fire in 64 CE in Rome. The voice of the martyrs still speaks today through Stephen’s sermon and Paul’s letters.

Antipas

Antipas was a *faithful witness* of Jesus in the Pergamum Church (Rev 2:13). Little is known about Antipas but his

sacrificial death did not escape the eyes of Jesus who has the keys of Death and Hades (Rev 1:18).

This unsung hero is a faithful disciple of Jesus in Pergamum for “holding fast his name and did not deny his faith” (Rev 2:13).

The original Greek text “ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου” (*ho martyrs mou ho pistos mou*) is translated as “my martyr my faithful one” which shows Antipas is commended on two counts: as martyr and as the faithful one.

Antipas is following his master Jesus who is called “ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός” (*ho martyrs, ho pistos*), the martyr, the faithful one (Rev 1:5).

Antipas was a true follower of Jesus. Like master, like disciple.

Be witnesses

As disciples of Jesus, let's give our all to be a faithful witness for Christ. Call on the Lord to empower us with the Spirit of God to be torchbearers for Christ in these end times.

Covid-19 is only a little taste of the end times. The difficulties and restrictions are training and equipping us to be stronger to face more terrible days that are coming around the corner. There will be great tribulations when the antichrist appears. Persecution will increase with greater and greater intensity. And we will be hated by all nations (Mt 24:8-9). Because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold (v.12).

Call on the Lord to fill us with God's Spirit in order that we may endure to the end, and that our love does not grow cold under dire hostility.

Let us be counted worthy to sacrifice our lives on the altar to be "martyrs of Jesus" (Rev 17:6).

The Spirit empowers us with the Word

Acts 4:31 "And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were *filled with the Holy Spirit* and continued to speak the *word of God* with boldness." (ESV, italics added)

Call on the Lord to fill us with the Spirit to speak the word of God with boldness. The apostles constantly spoke the word of God to help people come to faith. After healing the lame man, Peter took the opportunity to preach about God and Christ (Acts 3:12-26). The chief priests and elders wanted to silence them, so they warned them not to teach in the name of Jesus (4:17-18). But the word of God cannot be bound. Even when Peter and John were arrested and put in custody, they continued speaking the word with boldness. It is like the situation that we are now experiencing under the coronavirus pandemic restrictions. Covid-19 brought the world to its knees with city lockdowns such that the body of Christ cannot meet physically. But the word of God cannot be bound. We all became witnesses of how the word of God spread even

farther and wider through cyberspace and internet technologies.

The Spirit fills us with the Word

When Jesus fills us with the Spirit from God, he fills us with the word of God. The effect in the early church was that the word of God increased, multiplied, and prevailed.

Acts 6:7 “And the word of God continued to increase and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem ...”

Acts 12:24 “But the word of God increased and multiplied.”

Acts 19:20 “So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.”

How does the word increase and multiply in the church?

The word is like a seed planted in the hearts of people. When the word is implemented in our lives, it takes root. As we live out the word, our spiritual life grows and bears fruit.

The power is in the word of God. My husband and I always make it our aim to work hard to build up the church with the word of God. We work hard like farmers. We sow, plant, and water. God gives the growth (1Cor 3:6). As was true for the early church in Acts, God’s Spirit can move mightily in our church through the uncompromising preaching of the word of God.

The Spirit and the Word

God's Spirit and His Word worked powerfully in the life of the apostles. Are we filled with the Spirit to speak the word?

1. It is like the experience of David in which "the *Spirit* of Yahweh speaks by me, *his word* is on my tongue" (2Sam 23:2).
2. The apostle John says, "he whom God has sent utters the *words* of God, for he gives the *Spirit* without measure" (Jn 3:34).
3. Men of God experience great power when "the word of Yahweh comes to them."¹⁶

¹⁶ "The word of Yahweh came to Abraham" (Gen 15:4); "the word of Yahweh came to Samuel" (1Sam 15:10); "the word of Yahweh came to the prophet Gad" (2Sam 24:11); "the word of Yahweh came to Solomon" (1Ki 6:11); "the word of Yahweh came to Jonah" (Jonah 1:1; 3:1); "the word of Yahweh came to Elijah" (1Ki 18:1; 21:17, 28); "the word of Yahweh came to Isaiah" (Isa 38:4); "the word of Yahweh came to Micah" (Mic 1:1); "the word of Yahweh came to Hosea" (Hos 1:1); "the word of Yahweh came to Joel" (Joel 1:1); "the word of Yahweh came to Zephaniah" (Zeph 1:1); "the word of Yahweh" came to Haggai (Hag 2:20); "the word of Yahweh" came to Zechariah (Zech 4:8; 6:9; 7:1, 4, 8; 8:1, 18). Notably, two great prophets are so anointed by the Spirit of God that time and time again, "the word of Yahweh" came to Jeremiah (Jer 14:1; 16:1; 18:5; 24:4; 29:30; 32:1, 26; 33:1, 19, 23; 34:1, 8; 34:12; 35:1, 12; 37:6; 39:15; 42:7; 43:8; 46:1; 47:1; 49:34), and repeatedly "the word of Yahweh" came to Ezekiel (Ezek 1:3; 3:16; 6:1; 7:1; 11:14; 12:1, 8, 17, 21, 26; 13:1; 14:2, 12; 15:1; 16:1; 17:1, 11; 18:1; 20:2, 45; 21:1, 8, 18; 22:1, 17, 23; 23:1; 24:1, 15, 20; 25:1; 26:1; 27:1; 28:1, 11, 20; 29:1, 17; 30:1, 20; 31:1; 32:1, 17; 33:1, 23; 34:1; 35:1; 36:16; 37:15; 38:1).

4. God makes known His words to us when He pours His Spirit on us. “Behold I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you” (Prov 1:23).
5. When Peter preached in Cornelius’ house (Acts 10:34-43), “The *Holy Spirit* fell on all who heard the *word*” (v.44).

Clearly, God’s Spirit works mightily on the hearers when the word is preached faithfully. I am always humbled when I see God’s Spirit moving in our congregation when God’s word is preached accurately in His power. In all these 30+ years, I can never repeat a sermon the same way because the word of God is alive and active all the time. I always need to start from scratch when I prepare sermons in the Spirit. Even if it is to expound a Bible passage I had expounded before, God always reveals deeper truths through His Spirit.

Our ministry team always prays together to ask for the filling of the Spirit before the worship and preaching. We always seek the anointing of the Spirit to move among us with fresh wind. Even though I am always well prepared with pages of notes in delivering the sermon (it is our responsibility to work diligently to feed the sheep), I always stand in fear and trembling when speaking the word of God. God’s Spirit would sometimes tell me what to say in the moment. At times, there is deep silence. The silence would be so intense that you can hear the echo of your own voice. When people are intensely listening and hearts are being touched by the Spirit of God, I feel, as it were, “carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2Pet 1:21).

Sometimes I see teary eyes. Afterwards, they would ask me, “How do you know what my problem is?” I say, “I don’t. God knows.” They would be prompted by the Spirit to confess their sins to seek forgiveness. We would be in the back room of the church praying together. Sometimes disciplinary actions need to be implemented to help them overcome sins. At other times, restitution is required to make things right with God and others.

“The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God” (Eph 6:17). One time, after leading a Bible study at night, within a couple of hours, I received an email from a member in the Bible study group. She was greatly convicted of her hypocrisy and could not rest until the problem was quickly dealt with. The power of the word cut deeply into her heart like a two-edged sword. We become bystanders as we watch the Spirit of God at work.

The Jerusalem Council

The Holy Spirit worked mightily in the Jerusalem council when the apostles gathered together to make decisions regarding the controversy that came upon the Antioch Church. The apostles and the elders based their decisions by reflecting on God’s unfolding plan of salvation through Scripture, particularly the words of the prophets (Acts 15:15-18; cf. Amos 9:11-12; Isa 9:7; 43:7).

The apostles were guided by the Spirit through evidences in the Scripture. “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these

requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality” (Acts 15:28-29; cf. Lev 3:17; 17:8-13; 18:6-20).

Judas and Silas delivered the letter to Antioch and “were themselves prophets” (Acts 15:32). Prophets know Scripture and rightly discern the mind of God through the Spirit.

We must open our ears to listen to the Spirit of God. “He who has an ear, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). We are now near the end of the church age. *Let us call on the Lord* and tune our ears to hear what God’s Spirit has to say to our churches. Do we have prophets like the prophets of the Jerusalem church to lead our churches today?

The Spirit empowers us to advance the Kingdom of God

Let’s call on the Lord to empower us with the Spirit to advance the Kingdom of God. When Jesus came, he brought the presence and the nearness of the Kingdom of God to earth. We can experience the present reality of the Kingdom when we live under God’s rule. Where God reigns, there is the manifestation of the Kingdom. Today, the Kingdom is here in a limited sense, and will only be in its full manifestation in the Messianic age when Jesus ushers in the Kingdom on earth. The Kingdom has come partly but not fully yet. We can now

experience the dynamic power of the Kingdom because of the power of God's Spirit working in the Church with Jesus ruling as the head. In the future, there will be the final consummation of the Kingdom when all enemies are defeated under Jesus' reign on earth.

God's Kingdom has a wider scope than the Church. The Church is the community of God's people living out the life of the Kingdom. With the empowering of the Spirit, the presence of the Kingdom is manifested powerfully through active participation of the body life.

In Acts, the apostles built communities of churches in the power of the Spirit to live out the Kingdom message so as to advance God's Kingdom.

Philip – Carried by the Spirit

Philip's movements were constantly directed by the Spirit. Philip was "full of the Spirit" as he was chosen to be one of the seven to serve tables (Acts 6:3). Serving tables did not stop him from the ministry of the word.

Acts 8:12 "But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the *Kingdom of God* and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women." (ESV, italics added)

Philip was the first disciple to take the Gospel outside Jerusalem. He came to Samaria and proclaimed the Kingdom of God to the Samaritans. This was a turn of events as the Samaritans, who were despised by the Jews, came to faith in Christ. When the apostles heard that the Samaritans had

received the word of God, Peter and John went down there to lay hands on them to receive the Spirit. The first Samaritan church was established by the Jewish leaders. The apostles continued preaching the Gospel to many villages of the Samaritans (v.25).

Acts 8:29 “And the *Spirit said* to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” (ESV, italics added)

The direction from the Spirit was very specific. Philip went up to the chariot and found a eunuch reading the Scripture. This eunuch was an important court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He was in charge of her entire treasury. He came across a passage in Isaiah which he needed to understand. The eunuch wanted to know the identity of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53:7-8. Both Philip and the eunuch were guided by the Spirit and Scripture. Philip opened up the Scripture to him and told him about the good news of Jesus. So responsive was the eunuch that he immediately asked to be baptized when he saw water along the way.

Acts 8:38 “And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.” (ESV)

This whole incident was earth shattering to the early church as a eunuch was baptized into a community of God’s people. His physical deformity and his race would have prevented him from entering the Temple to approach God (Deut 23:1). But now God had prepared a Jew to explain Scripture to him

on the chariot. This incident confirms Yahweh's promise to the eunuchs of their inclusion in God's house should they hold fast to his covenant (Isa 56:4-5). God's work was further advanced to Ethiopia, the ancient kingdom of Kush, through this high ranking eunuch returning home "rejoicing" to his native land (Acts 8:39).

Acts 8:39b "*The Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away ...*" (ESV, italics added)

Having finished the work of baptizing the eunuch, the Spirit *carried* Philip away from the desert to Azotus (v.40) for another preaching mission. Azotus was an old Philistine city formerly called Ashdod. Philip proclaimed "the good news to all the towns" (v.40) through the coastal plains, and his journey ended at Caesarea.

It is no wonder that Philip has "four unmarried daughter who prophesied" (Acts 21:9). Philip must have been so filled with Scripture and the Spirit in all his missions that he was able to bring up his daughters to become prophetesses.

Through the empowering of the Spirit, Philip had a part in advancing God's work and Kingdom in Samaria, Kush, and Caesarea.

Peter – Directed by the Spirit

The Spirit of God was advancing the Kingdom by directing Peter to minister to the Gentiles.

Cornelius was a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man who was well spoken of even by the entire nation of the

Jews. An angel gave him instructions to send men to Joppa to find Peter. Even the specific name of the person whom Peter was residing with, and his trade as tanner, were also given to him. So precise was the instruction that the direction of his house by the sea was given. Today, you can even locate the traditional site above the ancient port of Old Jaffa. The timing of the arrival of the three men was so precise that when they entered Joppa, Peter was in the middle of understanding his vision.

Acts 10:19 And while Peter was pondering the vision, *the Spirit said* to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you. *Rise and go down* and accompany them without hesitation for I have sent them.” (ESV, italics added)

The Spirit of God specifically directed Peter to rise and accompany the men to Cornelius’s house.

Acts 11:12a “And the *Spirit told me* to go with them.” (ESV, italics added)

And when Peter entered Cornelius’ house at Caesarea, he saw a group of people gathered together waiting to hear the word of God. The Spirit directs us to hungry souls who need to be fed with the word. And when the people heard the word, the Spirit came down on them.

Acts 10:44-45 “While Peter was still saying these things, *the Holy Spirit fell* on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were

amazed, because the gift of *the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.*” (ESV, italics added)

These Gentiles experienced the same outpouring of the Spirit as did the Jews in the upper room at Pentecost. The work of God advanced in a radical shift for the early church on this occasion. Peter baptized the first Gentiles community of believers. In Peter’s own words, “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” (Acts 10:47)

The first Gentile church was established under the direction of the Spirit. This became a turning point in the early church as they launched out to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles.

The dynamic power of God’s Kingdom was extended to the Gentiles through Cornelius’ household church.

Barnabas and Saul – Set apart by the Spirit

Acts 13:2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, *the Holy Spirit said*, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” (ESV, italics added)

The apostles were *sent out by the Holy Spirit* on mission trips to proclaim the word of God beyond Antioch. When we go on a mission for God, let our decisions be guided by God’s Spirit. Going on a mission without the Spirit’s guidance is just man’s work.

Acts 13:1 “Now there were in the church at Antioch *prophets and teachers*, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a life long friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.” (ESV, italics added)

The Holy Spirit was able to move in the church of Antioch unhindered because the church was set up and built by prophets and teachers. Barnabas and Paul are familiar to us, but we have not heard of Simeon Niger, Lucius and Manaen. When a church is built upon the Word of God, prophets will arise to lead the Church to be in tune with the Spirit.

The church of Antioch obeyed the Spirit and did not keep their two best teachers but let them go out on missionary journeys. They fasted, prayed, and laid hands on them to send them off (v.3).

The setting apart of Barnabas and Paul marked a new beginning of God’s work advancing throughout Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, and Greece. Most of Paul’s letters were written to these regions where church communities were established in his missionary journeys.

Agabus – Foretold by the Spirit

What we need in churches are prophets who are in tune to God’s Spirit. Churches are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus being the cornerstone (Eph 2:20). Do we have prophets in our churches? They are needed to equip the saints for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ (Eph 4:11, 12).

Acts 11:27-28 “Now in these days, *prophets* came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and *foretold by the Spirit* that there would be a great famine over all the world.” (ESV, italics added)

Agabus was a prophet who was in tune to the Spirit and was told ahead of time by the Spirit of a great famine. This was probably the famine that took place in the fourth year of Claudius. The famine continued for many years, of which Josephus said, “many died for want of food.”¹⁷

The famine was made known to Agabus so the Antioch church was able to send relief to Judea (Acts 11:29). In the same way, God will work through us in these last days during which, as Jesus had already forewarned us, there will be “famines and pestilences” in the end times (Lk 21:11). With the Covid-19 pandemic that has been striking worldwide in the past two years, a great global famine will soon come our way in due time. Let us get ready and help each other to care for the body of Christ. With the Covid-19 pandemic, there is as yet no calamitous worldwide shortage of food; but when famine comes, the suffering that hunger brings will be much more intense.

The Spirit advances God’s Kingdom not only in sending apostles to faraway places but also in local churches by consolidating them “to love another as yourself”. Many saints in Jerusalem were poor (Rom 15:26). Even Macedonia and Achaia also contributed to the needs in Jerusalem. This further consolidated the unity of Jews and Gentiles with greater

¹⁷ Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book XX, 51-53.

oneness in the body of Christ. This is how the Kingdom of God advances through the empowering of the Spirit.

Paul – Forbidden by the Spirit

In the book of Acts, God’s Spirit directed the apostles’ movement in all their mission endeavors. The leading of God’s Spirit was not just a matter of where to go but also where not to go on their mission trips.

Acts 16:6 “And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been *forbidden by the Holy Spirit* to speak the word in Asia.” (ESV, italics added)

On this second missionary journey, Paul and his companions were *forbidden by the Holy Spirit* to speak the word in Asia. Apparently, this was not the time to go there.

Acts 16:7 “And when they had come to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the *spirit of Jesus did not allow them*” (ESV, italics added).

The spirit of Jesus is actually the Spirit of God working through Jesus who is the head of the Church. Jesus, the resurrected man, intercedes for us in heaven. If Jesus were God, there would be no point in the intercession. Through Jesus, the Spirit of God did not allow Paul and his companions to go to Bithynia.

Soon afterwards, Paul was given a vision of a man of Macedonia who urged him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us” (v.9). This open door resulted in the advancing

of God's work among the Greeks in Macedonia. The churches of Philippi and Thessalonica were built during Paul's second missionary journey.

When we are forbidden by the Spirit to go to a region, the Spirit opens other doors for us to advance God's work in other regions.

Paul – Constrained by the Spirit

Acts 20:22 “And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, *constrained by the Spirit*, not knowing what will happen to me there.” (ESV, italics added)

Paul was *constrained by the Spirit* to go to Jerusalem even if it meant suffering and imprisonment for him (21:23). But *through the Spirit*, the disciples at Tyre told Paul not to go to Jerusalem (21:4). And then at Caesarea, the *Spirit said* to Agabus that Paul will be bound in Jerusalem (21:11) if he went there. The prophecy of Agabus was true but when the disciples heard this, they urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

When we face adversity, we easily shrink from the possibility of suffering, but Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem as the Spirit had already prepared his heart to be “ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” (21:13) Paul was ready to lay down his life for the Lord.

God's work was actually advanced further to the ends of the world with Paul's imprisonment and later martyrdom. God's work could not be bound physically but continued to move

forward with the empowering of the Spirit in His people. Paul ended up in Rome under house arrest but that didn't stop him from "proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ" (28:30-31).

God's Kingdom advances even under persecutions and Satan's attacks. When suffering comes our way, we do not need to lose heart. We must through many tribulations enter the Kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

There will be intense persecutions in the end times. Let us call on the Lord to give us the spiritual stamina to advance God's Kingdom in these turbulent years of the end times.

The Spirit directs us like wind

Acts 2:1-2 "When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like *a mighty rushing wind*, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting." (ESV, italics added)

Call on the Lord for His Spirit to direct our movements. You can experience the great movement of the Spirit like "a rushing wind". "Wind" and "spirit" translate the same Greek word *pneuma*. The Spirit of God is not static but moves freely in the life of a baptized Christian. Acts gives a record of the movement of the Spirit in the lives of the apostles.

Today, as I call on Yahweh, I experience God's Spirit like wind.

“The *wind (pneuma)* blows where it wishes” (Jn 3:8). You hear the sound of *wind* but you do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the *Spirit*.

Wind is invisible yet you can feel its movement. In serving the church these years, at times I hear the mighty rushing wind blowing when God’s Spirit is at work. The wind blows where it wills. I listen and do not resist, but follow the Spirit’s direction. God’s Spirit directs our coworkers to go to different parts of the world to spread the Gospel and pioneer churches for God.

Oftentimes in my daily walk with God, I feel the gentle breeze of the Spirit leading me to care for people in their specific needs.

We need to be led by the fresh wind of the Spirit every day to do God’s will. Even in the write-up of this exposition, I ride on the wind of the Spirit and experience God’s mighty movement.

As we run the race to proclaim the Gospel to all nations in these end times, all the more, we must call on the Lord to help us discern and follow the direction, momentum, and timing of the wind of the Spirit. One of the signs of the end times is that God will raise up a prophetic people who are directed by the wind of the Spirit *to make ready a people prepared* for the Lord’s coming. Just important it was for John the Baptist “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Lk 1:17) in Jesus’ first coming, such preparation is even more crucial for Jesus’ second coming in glory. Before Jesus returns to judge the

world, God’s prophets need to arise to warn and prepare the flock to triumphantly walk through the bitter journey of the end times.

The Day of the Lord

Acts 2: 19-20 “And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. (ESV; cf. Joel 2:30-31)

Peter quotes a section of Joel in his sermon at Pentecost. While it is crucial to understand the outpouring of the Spirit in relation to Joel’s prophecy, the continuing quote regarding the day of the Lord is just as significant. In Joel, the day of the Lord is the day of Yahweh. In the NT, the day is sometimes spoken specifically of as “the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Cor 1:8), “the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6), “the day of our Lord Jesus” (2Cor 1:14), “the day of Christ” (Phil 1:10; 2:16). The day of Yahweh has to do with the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The day of the Lord Jesus Christ is the day Jesus will return to earth. The Son of Man will come in a cloud with power and glory.

Luke 21:25-27 “And there will be *signs in sun and moon and stars*, and *on the earth* distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear

and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. *For the powers of heavens will be shaken.* And then they will see *the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*” (ESV, italics added)

Jesus says, “When these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because *your redemption* is drawing near” (Lk 21:28). On that day, Yahweh will usher in the final phase of salvation. Yahweh will set up His Kingdom with Jesus as King to rule on earth.

Matthew 24:36 “But concerning *that day* and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the son, but *the Father only.*” (ESV, italics added)

Take note of the fact that only the Father knows the day and the hour of that event. Even Jesus himself does not know. If Jesus were God, he would know. Even as the exalted man, Jesus needs to submit to God’s instructions. Only Yahweh knows, for He is God.

Maranatha

The early church looked forward to that day that they would often say “Maranatha”.

1 Corinthians 16:22 “If anyone has no love for the Lord,¹⁸ let him be accursed. *Our Lord, come.*” (ESV, italics added)

¹⁸ This verse in ESV, CJB, HCSB, MIT, NASB, NIV, NJB is translated from *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Nestle-Aland 27th edition: εἴ τις οὐ

“Our Lord, come” is an Aramaic word מְרַנְנָתָא, which is translated to μαράνα θά (*maranatha*) in Greek.

Maranatha is a watchword in the Jewish church community. “Our Lord, come”. Paul often speaks of “Jesus Christ” as “*our* Lord” (Rom 1:4; 5:21; 1Cor 1:9; Eph 3:11, etc.). “Maranatha” expresses our heart’s longing for *our Lord* Jesus to *come*. The early disciples longed for the return of Jesus. Do you have this longing for the coming of Jesus?

Come, Lord Jesus

The book of Revelation ends with Ἀμήν, ἔρχου κύριε Ἰησοῦ — Amen, come Lord Jesus.

Revelation 22:20 ‘He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” *Amen Come, Lord Jesus!*’ (ESV, italics added)

Jesus says, “I am coming soon”. Let our response be: “Come Lord Jesus”. Amen!

We call on the name of the Lord Jesus because we long for his return to establish God’s Kingdom on earth. On that day, he will usher in the Kingdom to reign as King and be literally involved in ruling the affairs of the world. Jesus will rule the world with God’s laws and principles.

φιλεῖ τὸν κύριον — if anyone has no love for the Lord. The KJV follows the Textus Receptus Greek text εἴ τις οὐ φιλεῖ τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν χριστόν (if any man love not the Lord Jesus).

Do you long for Jesus and the arrival of the coming Kingdom?

Longing for Jesus and the Kingdom

A person who calls on the name of the Lord longs for the Kingdom of God. He calls out to God to empower him with His Spirit to live out the Kingdom life here and now. At the same time, he longs for Jesus to come to inaugurate the Kingdom on earth.

Christians today do not know how to long for the Kingdom because there seems to be a lack of teaching on the Kingdom of God in the churches.

The Kingdom of God is God's redemptive reign. The Kingdom of God is about God the King and His reign over the people. If God does not reign in our lives today, how does He reign over us in the future? In this present age, the Church is the place where we experience the dynamic power of the Kingdom. True Christians who live a life under the Lordship of God and Jesus are people of the Kingdom. Under the empowering of the Spirit, they manifest the power of the Kingdom in their lives and in the body life. Today, the Kingdom is hidden in the world because the Kingdom of God has not yet been fully established on earth.

We need to properly understand the teaching of the Kingdom of God so that we may truly live for the Kingdom and long for the Kingdom to come.

Many Christians have made the costly mistake of believing that the Kingdom of God is a place in heaven that people go to after they die. As a result, they fantasize about going to heaven. They do well to ask themselves if God doesn't reign in their lives on earth, why would they want to go to heaven to live under God's reign? It is true that God is in heaven. What is taught in the Bible is that the Kingdom of God comes to us on earth. The Kingdom is to be manifested and established on earth.

There is also the mistaken notion that the Kingdom is within a person's heart. When asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Lk 17:20-21).

This passage is often misunderstood as though the Kingdom of God is "within" a person. The Pharisees were constantly opposing Jesus, so how could the Kingdom be within them? Neither is Jesus telling the Pharisees to look within their own hearts to find the Kingdom.

The Greek word ἐντός (*entos*) is a preposition that can be translated as "among". In the context of the passage, Jesus is pointing to himself as the "son of man" standing "among" his people. He repeatedly uses the title "son of man" of himself four times in this passage (Lk 17:22, 24, 26, 30) to drive home an important message that the "son of man" standing among them is the Messiah. Jesus will be the one to establish the coming Kingdom. This is why in Luke 17:30, Jesus says "the

son of man” will be *revealed* for all to see. There will be signs heralding the son of man like lightning flashing in the sky (Lk 17:24). When he returns to earth, the Kingdom will be seen by all.

The “son of man” is a Messianic sign of the coming Kingdom, but *first*, “he must suffer many things and be rejected by the generation” (Lk 17:25). The Pharisees were “looking” for the Kingdom in the wrong way. It seems that the same veil is upon Christians today.

It is astonishing for me to discover that many Christians don’t really believe in the Kingdom. They know that Jesus is returning but they don’t really believe that Jesus is going to be the King to rule the world. They long for Jesus to return, but they do not long for the Kingdom that Jesus will inaugurate at his coming. Isn’t this surprising? There is a lot of unbelief among Christians and pastors. True to Jesus’ words, “When the son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Lk 18:8)

Most Christians are not keen to understand the Kingdom. They want to learn about Jesus but not about the Kingdom. Jesus often encourages his disciples to understand the Father’s heart. It is the Father’s good pleasure to give the Kingdom to his little flock (Lk 12:32). Isn’t this exciting? The Father wants His children to inherit the Kingdom that He has prepared for us from the foundation of the world (Mt 25:34).

We cannot separate Jesus from the coming Kingdom. Jesus is the appointed King of kings in the coming Kingdom.

If we love Jesus, we would also love the Kingdom he is bringing to earth. Otherwise, how will we inherit the Kingdom with Christ? Is your spiritual life motivated by inheriting the coming Kingdom on earth?

To inherit the Kingdom, we need to “enter” into the Kingdom when Christ inaugurates the Kingdom on earth. On that day, the Kingdom will no longer be in the spiritual realm, but a literal Kingdom that manifests God’s glory on earth. Jesus says to the faithful servants, “*enter* into the joy of your master” (Mt 25:21, 23) and to the sheep, “*inherit* the Kingdom” (Mt 25:34). Only the wise virgins *enter* into the Messianic marriage feast but *the door* is shut to the foolish virgins (Mt 25:10). The extra oil is required for entry. Covid-19 is waking us up to prepare oil for the age to come. In the final salvation, there will be a door to separate those who will enter and those who will not (cf. Lk 13:24-27). When the door is closed, no one can enter. Now is the time to prepare oil to get ready. Let us not procrastinate. Take the warning that not everyone who calls Jesus, “Lord, Lord,” *will enter* the Kingdom but only those who do the will of the Father (Mt 7:21).

Jesus prepared his disciples to play an active role in this coming Kingdom. “You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Lk 22:28-30) Let us not be slow to respond to Jesus’ words here. “Truly I say to you, in the new world, when the

Son of man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Mt 19:28)

Jesus will not reign alone in the coming Kingdom. For those who overcome, Jesus will grant him to sit with him on his throne, just as he also conquered and sat down with his Father on His throne (Rev 3:21). What a glorious day it will be for God’s children when they can participate as co-heirs to rule with Jesus on earth. We need to meditate on this every day.

But how many will respond? Many are called but few are chosen. In the end, only a small remnant will respond to God’s call and co-reign with Christ in the coming Kingdom. God’s work is often accomplished by the few. Will you be among the remnant that endures to the end? If we endure, we will also reign with Christ (2Tim 2:12).

Jesus proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom

With the coming of our Lord Jesus soon, let’s finish the task of proclaiming the “Gospel of the Kingdom” to all nations before the end comes (Mt 24:10). It is the Gospel of the Kingdom that the nations need to receive.

The Kingdom of God is the focal point of Jesus’ message. He preaches fervently about the Kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount, the 30+ parables, and the Olivet discourse of the

end times. When Jesus came out to preach, his first message was about the Kingdom of God. The announcement was not just about the Kingdom but that the Kingdom was coming near on earth.

Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach saying, “Repent, for the *kingdom of heaven* is at hand.” (ESV, italics added)

The Kingdom of heaven is synonymous with the Kingdom of God. Matthew prefers to use “Kingdom of heaven” rather than “Kingdom of God” because his main audience is the Jews.

The word “at hand” in Greek is ἐγγίζω (*engizō*), which means “to come near” (TDNT). The Kingdom of God is near but not yet here. The coming of the Kingdom is imminent but has not yet arrived. It is like the prophecy of Joel concerning the near yet future day of YHWH. God’s reign has now come near in the person of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus has brought on earth the power of the Kingdom through His life and teaching.

The Kingdom is almost here, therefore there is an urgent call to repentance to prepare people for the arrival of the Kingdom. Repentance means that people need to take a radical step of abandoning the old way of life and totally commit themselves to live solely for God and His Kingdom. Salvation is possible because of God’s atoning work through Jesus on the cross.

The prevalent “good news” in today’s churches is “to believe in Jesus and you will have eternal life”. That was the good news preached to me when I became a Christian. I responded to altar calls. I signed all the booklets that tell me to receive Jesus into my heart for the forgiveness of sins. This is how the Gospel message is introduced to most people in crusades and evangelistic meetings.

The preaching of the Kingdom of God is almost absent in today’s Gospel message. Have we rejected God’s Kingdom like how the Israelites rejected God as King (1Sam 8:7)? Does anyone preach the Gospel of the Kingdom anymore? God led me to Pastor Eric in Montreal where he preached about the Gospel of the Kingdom in his church. Finally, I heard a preacher who expounds the Gospel of the Kingdom. I began to understand the parables of Jesus and God’s Kingdom with clarity.

The Gospel of God is the Kingdom of God

Luke 4:43 “... I must preach the *good news of the Kingdom of God* to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.”
(ESV, italics added)

The Greek word *euangelion* for “good news” is sometimes translated as “Gospel”. What exactly is the Gospel that Jesus preaches? The Gospel that Jesus preaches is “the Kingdom of God”. The purpose of Jesus’ entire ministry is to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to us.

Mark 1:14-15 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming *the Gospel of God*, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and *the Kingdom of God* is at hand; repent and believe in the *Gospel*.” (ESV, italics added)

The Greek word *euangelion* (good news or Gospel) is repeated twice here: Gospel of God and believe in the Gospel.

The Gospel of God is the Kingdom of God. Jesus is telling the people to repent and to believe in the Gospel. What is the Gospel? The Gospel is about the Kingdom of God. Do you believe the Kingdom of God and that the Kingdom is coming to earth? Do we preach about the imminence of God’s Kingdom? Do we even think about the coming Kingdom at all?

We do well to ask ourselves whether the good news that we preach focuses on the Kingdom of God. Or have we distorted the good news?

The Kingdom of God is always on Jesus’ lips. Wherever Jesus went in his ministry, the message was always the “Gospel of the Kingdom”.

Matthew 4:23 “And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the *Gospel of the Kingdom* and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.” (ESV, italics added; cf. Mt 9:35; Lk 8:1)

Later, the twelve were commissioned to go out to preach the same Gospel message about the Kingdom of God.

Luke 9:1-2 “And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and

he sent them out to proclaim *the kingdom of God* and to heal.”
(ESV, italics added)

The twelve disciples proclaimed the same Gospel message that Jesus preached. Again, the core message of the Gospel is: “the Kingdom of heaven is at hand”.

Matthew 10:7 “And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘*The kingdom of heaven* is at hand.’ (ESV, italics added)

In his parables, Jesus put in picture language the manifestation of God’s Kingdom in this present age as well as the eschatological Kingdom to come. We need to dive into the teaching of Jesus’ parables to absorb the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Finally, so important is the Kingdom message that in Jesus’ final forty days before his ascension, he spoke on one topic: the Kingdom of God

Acts 1:3 “He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the *kingdom of God.*” (ESV, italics added)

Can you feel Jesus’ burden in wanting his disciples to understand the Kingdom of God?

Let us call on the Lord to focus sharply on His Kingdom so that we can rightly proclaim the Gospel message.

The apostles proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom

Following Jesus' example, the first century apostles and disciples encapsulated the significant teaching of the Kingdom in their writings.

Acts 8:12 “But when they believed Philip as he preached *good news about the kingdom of God* and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” (ESV, italics added)

Philip's preaching was focused on proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. Let us not water down the Gospel message.

Wherever Paul went on his missionary journeys, he proclaimed the same Gospel message of the Kingdom of God.

Acts 19:8 “And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them *about the kingdom of God.*” (ESV, italics added)

When Paul was with the Ephesians, he imprinted in their hearts the Kingdom. As he said farewell to the Ephesians elders, he summarized his teaching with the proclamation of the Kingdom.

Acts 20:25 “And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again.” (ESV)

Let's follow Paul's example to testify to the Kingdom of God to our hearers.

Acts 28:23 "From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the *kingdom of God* and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets." (ESV, italics added)

The book of Acts closes with the following words of Paul proclaiming the Kingdom of God in his two years of house arrest.

Acts 28:30-31 "He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the *kingdom of God* and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance." (ESV, italics added)

The Kingdom of God cannot be separated from Jesus and his teaching. Towards the end of Paul's life, he continued to proclaim the Kingdom message and the teaching of Jesus.

Let's not lose our focus in our preaching. Let's be workers for the Kingdom of God (Col 4:11) and God's coworkers for the Gospel of Christ (1Thes 3:2; cf. 2Cor 2:12; 10:14; Phil 1:27).

Our Task: Proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom to all nations

Matthew 24:14 “And this *gospel of the kingdom* will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to *all nations*, and then the end will come.” (ESV, italics added)

One of the last sign of the end times (Mt 24:3) is to proclaim “the Gospel of the Kingdom”. When all the nations are reached with the true Gospel of the Kingdom, the end will come. Let’s not water down the Gospel message. Even in Paul’s days, he warned the Galatians not to “distort the Gospel of Christ” (Gal 1:7). While it is true that Jesus died for us to forgive our sins, there’s much more to the Gospel of Christ than receiving a personal salvation. Given the centrality of the Kingdom of God in Jesus’ preaching, we need to grapple with how salvation is connected to the Kingdom of God.

The Gospel is about the Kingdom. God saves us so that we can be a part of His new creation to live for His Kingdom. We are saved to become a part of the movement of God to manifest the life of the Kingdom in this world. Sadly, to the peril of many Christians, their lives have never been transformed as they have only been changed externally to be church goers.

In this new creation, our lives are being transformed and renewed by the Spirit to live for the Kingdom. God is preparing “a chosen race, *a royal priesthood*, a holy nation, a people for his own possession” (1Pet 2:9). Race, priesthood,

nation, people—these are communities of God’s people. There is no place for self-centered individualism. We are to become a community of people to live for the Kingdom. While it is true that God saves us individually, each individual who is redeemed must participate actively in the body life of the church. Too many Christians settle for a personal salvation and become church goers but never lovers of God and His Kingdom. Going to church does not save you if your life has not been transformed to live out the Kingdom in the body life. Some Christians lose interest going to church and quit, because going to church is a hobby for them. We need to go beyond attending church services and make it our goal to become a royal priesthood for God. God’s original intent for the Israelites was for them to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:6). Israel’s identity as a kingdom of priests is now fulfilled in part by the Church that lives under the Lordship of God and Jesus. Christ has “made us a *kingdom*, priests to his God and Father” (Rev 1:6). Again, it is repeated in Rev 5:10 that we are “a *kingdom* and priests to our God” and we “reign on the earth” in the coming Kingdom.

It is important that we understand the Gospel message. The Kingdom of God is the central message of the Gospel. Only the Gospel of the Kingdom will bring salvation to people. We are to seek the Kingdom as the number one priority of our lives (Mt 6:33). Jesus taught us how to become people of the Kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount. As we live out the Sermon on the Mount, our lives are transformed and renewed by the Spirit to manifest the beauty of the

Kingdom in the body life. The Kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power (1Cor 4:20), of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17). Obey Jesus' teaching in the parables regarding the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is like a merchant in search of fine pearls and upon finding one pearl of great value, he sells all and buys the pearl of great price (Mt 13:45-46). Jesus reveals the secrets of the Kingdom of God to his disciples (Mt 13:11). Be the good soil into which the seed is sown to yield fruit one hundred, sixty, or thirty fold in God's Kingdom (Mt 13:8; 23). Be on guard against the tares that are sown in the Kingdom (Mt 13:24-30; 36-43).

The Kingdom that Jesus proclaims is a new way of life. As we live out Jesus' teaching, the Kingdom becomes a present reality in the life of the Church. While the church is the seed of the Kingdom, we anticipate with exuberant joy the Kingdom that will be fully realized when God rules on earth through the Messiah Jesus. If you do not actively participate in the body life of the church today, how will you participate in the coming Kingdom? Do you even want to enter into the coming Kingdom? God is now choosing His priests to co-reign with Christ in the coming Kingdom. Let us respond to this high calling in this life.

God is raising up a remnant to call on His Name in these days to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom to *all nations*. Jesus manifested the power and presence of the Kingdom in his life and ministry for us to follow. Before the end comes,

we need to reach the nations by faithfully teaching the same Gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus preaches.

The faithful Church is to be a sign to *all nations*. In the latter days, the mountain of the house of YHWH shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and exalted above all the hills. “*All nations* shall flow to it” (Isa 2:2).

Micah 4:1-5 It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the *house of YHWH* shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of YHWH, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in the paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of YHWH from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of YHWH of hosts has spoken. For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of YHWH our God forever and ever. (ESV, YHWH restored, italics and underline added)

As we call on the name of Yahweh, we walk in the name of Yahweh. The house of Yahweh that is lifted up to the highest of the mountains is a sign which God uses so that all the nations can flock to it to learn the ways of Yahweh. We are commissioned to build the house of Yahweh in these end times. The house signifies the Church. The Church is to shine

as light on the hill (Mt 5:14) rising up on the highest mountain to bring all nations to God. The Church indeed has a high calling in God's Kingdom. God is raising up His faithful remnant to establish the Church before Jesus returns.

This passage of Micah will have its ultimate fulfillment in the coming Kingdom. Jesus the Messiah King will rule from Jerusalem to teach the law of Yahweh and he shall judge between nations such that no swords will ever again be lifted up against nations. Every man shall sit under the vine and fig tree in peace to walk in the name of Yahweh forever and ever. It will be a time of great revival of learning, refreshment, growth, and maturity for everyone in this millennial Kingdom. Does this excite you?

Your Kingdom Come

The Lord's Prayer directs us to the Father. Hallowed be Your Name (Mt 6:9). Let God's Name, Yahweh, consume your heart as it did to Joel and all the prophets of God. As you call on YHWH with holy reverence, pray the next sentence: May Your *Kingdom come* (Mt 6:10a). If the Kingdom has come, why pray this sentence in the Lord's Prayer? Pray for the Kingdom to come. The verse is not finished yet. "Your Kingdom come, your will be done on *earth* as it is in heaven." (Mt 6:10) God's Kingdom is going to come on earth where the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven. At Jesus' return to earth, he will bring in the Kingdom to fulfill God's ultimate will and purpose on earth. There will be continuity from this

age to the age to come. The affairs of the world will continue when Jesus takes up the Davidic throne to reign in Jerusalem. Jesus will reign over Israel and the world with righteousness and bring all people to worship the one true God Yahweh. Jesus will fulfill all the prophecies proclaimed by the Hebrew prophets to establish justice and peace for all nations (cf. Isa 52:7-10; Zeph 3:14-20; etc).

We have an important role to play in God's plan of salvation. God wants us to reign with Christ in the coming Kingdom. Imagine, we will have such a close interaction with Jesus and will join him in partnership to rule the world with righteousness. The reward is so huge that we will be able to reign with Christ not for one year, or ten years, or a hundred years, but for one thousand years (Rev 20:6). How exciting!

As people of the Kingdom, we long for the Kingdom to come. The Church is to arise to proclaim the *Gospel of the Kingdom* to get ready a people for the imminent arrival of the Kingdom on earth. "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Mk 1:15; cf. Lk 10:9, 11)

Conclusion

The calling on the name of the Lord in Acts 2:21 refers, first and foremost, to the calling of Yahweh (Joel 2:32). Yahweh saves. How does Yahweh save? Yahweh saves through His Messiah. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Messiah that was long predicted by the OT prophets.

The sermon at Pentecost reaches its climax when Yahweh exalted the *Lord* Messiah to sit at His right hand, a position of honor and authority, to act on His behalf. Our Lord Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation.

The thrust of Peter's sermon is to *let the house of Israel know for certain* that God has made Jesus to be the Lord and Christ (Act 2:36). Israel is always God's primary concern when it comes to salvation. The tide is going to be turned for all Israel to be saved.

On the day of Pentecost, the Jews and Gentiles experienced the pouring of the Spirit prophesied by Joel. In the event of the outpouring of the Spirit, the Jews and Gentiles became a community of God's people to manifest the Kingdom life. Subsequently, more communities of churches were set up from Jerusalem to Rome.

Jesus, the exalted Lord, is given the authority to be the head of the church. Today, Yahweh rules the Church through our Lord Jesus. We submit to the Lordship of Christ by obeying all that Jesus commands (Mt 28:20). Together as a church, we pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart (2Tim 2:22).

Let's call on the name of the Lord to empower us with the Spirit to fulfill the mission of the Church. The great commission is to "*make disciples of all nations*" (Mt 28:19) with the "*Gospel of the Kingdom*" (Mt 24:14). Not only do we proclaim the true Gospel of the Kingdom, but more importantly, we disciple all nations to obey all that Jesus had commanded. Disciples are built and nurtured in the body of Christ of which Jesus is the head. It is through the body life that God pours out His Spirit onto His people with prophetic visions and dreams to finish the mission given to the Church.

The Gospel is not about our stories. We testify to the reality of the Kingdom of God in our lives to point people to the coming Kingdom when Jesus rules as King of kings. After the millennium, Jesus will hand over the Kingdom to God the Father and Jesus himself will also be subjected to God that God may be all in all (1 Cor 15:24-28).

As a church, we pray to the Father for His Kingdom to come. Let's call on the Lord and long for Jesus and His Kingdom. "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay." (Heb 10:37) Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus. Amen!

Romans 10:13

“For everyone who calls on the name
of the Lord will be saved.”

Romans 10:13 is a citation of Joel 2:32, “Everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh will be saved”.

What is the connection of Romans 10:13 to Joel 2:32? Peter’s message at Pentecost cites a whole section of Joel, while Paul cites only one sentence here. The letter to the Romans was written about 30 years after the event at Pentecost, so could it be that Paul was quoting from Peter’s sermon at Pentecost? In the early church, the messages of the apostles were circulated among themselves (cf. Col 4:16; 1Thess 5:27) as the NT was only canonized much later in the 4th century.

When Paul wrote to the Romans, he had not visited Rome yet. Nevertheless, he longed to visit them to impart spiritual gifts to strengthen them (Rom 1:11). Romans is Paul’s longest epistle in which he uses the occasion to write a detailed treatise on the message of salvation. The Gospel is “the power of God for *salvation* to everyone who believes, to the Jews first and the Greeks. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by

faith” (Rom 1:16-17; cf. Hab 2:4). Righteousness and faith are the key themes of Romans.

To understand Romans 10:13, we need to study Romans 10 in the wider context of Romans 9–11.

Romans 9 – 11 concerns the salvation of Israel

Romans 9–11 deals with the salvation of Israel and how Israel’s fall resulted in the salvation of the Gentiles, finally leading to its climax that “all Israel will be saved.” In the end, the hope of salvation will return to the Jews with greater blessing.

Romans	Chapter																
Greek	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
σωτηρία	1									2	1		1				5
σώζω					2			1	1	2	2						8

The Greek words σωτηρία (salvation) and σώζω (to save) together occur 13 times in the book of Romans. When Greek words have the same root stem, they belong to the same word family.

The statistics in the above table ¹⁹ reveal that the subject of salvation is concentrated in Romans 9–11 with 8 occurrences,

¹⁹ The statistics for the Greek words σωτηρία and σώζω in the 16 chapters of Romans are tabulated from the website <http://yahwehdehua.net/cn/snstats/nt>. Select the book of Romans, key in G4991 for σωτηρία and G4982 for σώζω.

taking up more than half of the 13 total occurrences in all of Romans. The overarching theme of this section is God's salvation for the Jews and Gentiles:

(1) A remnant *will be saved* (9:27).

(2) Paul's heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they *may be saved* (10:1).

(3) Confessing with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believing in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you *are saved* (10:9).

(4) With the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and *is saved* (10:10).

(5) Everyone who calls on the name of Lord *will be saved* (10:13).

(6) *Salvation* has come to the Gentiles so as to make Israel jealous (11:11).

(7) To make my fellow Jews jealous and thus *save* some of them (11:14).

(8) The climax: all Israel *will be saved* (11:26).

Significant words in Romans 9 - 11

A careful study of the special nouns and verbs used in Romans 9–11 can reveal further key words that are related to salvation.²⁰

Romans 9 – 11 — Significant Words				Chapters			
Strong's Number	Greek	Translation	Part of Speech	9	10	11	Total
G2316	θεός	God	noun	9	5	12	26
G3004	λέγω	to say, speak	verb	4	9	6	19
G2474	Ἰσραήλ	Israel	adj*	5	2	4	11
G1343	δικαιοσύνη	righteousness	noun	4	7	0	11
G1484	ἔθνος	Gentiles	noun	2	2	5	9
G2962	κύριος	Lord	noun	2	4	2	8
G4100	πιστεύω	believe	verb	1	7	0	8
G1653	ἐλεέω	have mercy	verb	4	0	3	7
G5547	Χριστός	Christ	adj*	3	4	0	7
G1125	γράφω	write	verb	2	2	2	6
G1461	ἐγκεντρίζω	graft in	verb	0	0	6	6
G2588	καρδία	heart	noun	1	5	0	6
G2992	λαός	people	noun	3	1	2	6
G4102	πίστις	faith	noun	2	3	1	6
G2046	ἐρέω	utter, speak	verb	4	0	1	5
G2309	θέλω	will, desire	verb	4	0	1	5
G2564	καλέω	call	verb	5	0	0	5
G2798	κλάδος	branch	noun	0	0	5	5
G4690	σπέρμα	seed	noun	4	0	1	5
G4982	σώζω	to save	verb	1	2	2	5
G4487	ῥῆμα	word	noun	0	4	0	4
G4991	σωτηρία	salvation	noun	0	2	1	3

* The word is technically an adjective but is used as a noun

²⁰ The statistics for the Greek words in Romans 9–11 are tabulated from Holman Christian Standard Bible, used by permission. I am using the 2nd Edition of HCSB (2009) whose textual source for the NT is Nestle-Aland 27.

Key words related to salvation in Romans 9–11 are: God, speak, Israel, Gentiles, righteousness, Lord, Christ, believe and faith (the two are of the same word family), save and salvation (same word family), and mercy.

1. θεός (God) has the highest frequency with 26 occurrences. The main concern is how Yahweh God accomplishes the final salvation for Israel. The entire section is theocentric. A sentence block diagram of Romans 9-11 is provided in Appendix 3. This will allow the reader to see the main themes and Paul's flow of thought easily. This whole section is God-centered, and ends with a doxology to God, "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen" (Rom 11:36).
2. λέγω (to say, speak) has the next highest frequency with a greater concentration in Romans 10. Paul uses λέγω whenever he refers to Scripture (9:17; 10:11; 11:2); what God says (9:15, 25; 10:21; 11:4); what David says (11:9); and what Isaiah says (10:16, 20). He also uses "I say" referring to himself (9:1; 10:18, 19; 11:1, 11, 13).
3. "Salvation" (3 times in noun form and 5 times in verbal form) concerns "Israel" (11 occurrences) and "Gentiles" (9 occurrences).
4. "Believe" (πιστεύω) and "faith" (πίστις) belong to the same word family in Greek. Out of the 14 combined occurrences, 10 are concentrated in Romans 10.

5. “Righteousness” (δικαιοσύνη) occurs 11 times, with a greater concentration in Romans 10. A major theme of Romans 10 is that sinful men are without any righteousness of their own, therefore they need the righteousness of God for their salvation.
6. “Lord” (κύριος) occurs 8 times. Sometimes “Lord” refers to Yahweh, and sometimes to Jesus.
7. “Christ” (Χριστός) occurs 7 times, all in Romans 9 and 10. God’s righteousness is revealed and manifested in the person of Christ.
8. “To have mercy” (ἐλέεω) occurs 7 times, found in Romans 9 and 11. For both Jews and Gentiles alike, God has mercy on all people.

Not all Israel is Israel

Romans 9:2-3 “That I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” (ESV)

As a fellow Jew, Paul was in deep sorrow for his countrymen because in the hardening of their hearts, the Jews have rejected Christ.

Romans 9:6 “It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.” (NIV)

God’s promises always hold true for the true Israel. There is a true Israel within Israel. Paul distinguishes two groups of Israelites: ethnic Israel and spiritual Israel. Even though the Jews are physical descendants of Israel, not all Israel belongs to the true Israel.

Israel is God’s chosen people, but not all God’s chosen people are *chosen*. Only the true Israel is chosen by God. Not all the offspring of Abraham are true children of Abraham. Not every child of Israel in the flesh is a child of promise.

To belong to Israel, it is necessary to become “children of the promise” (Rom 9:8) through faith in Christ. Those who belong to Christ are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise (Gal 3:29).

Not all the elect are *the elect*. Why? The Jews did not keep the law by faith and have stumbled over the stumbling stone (Rom 9:32). The crucified Christ was a stumbling block to the Jews.

God raises a Remnant

Romans 9:27 “And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only *a remnant of them will be saved.*” (ESV, italics added)

Even though Israel as a whole has rejected Christ, the word of God has not failed. Not all the chosen people are turning to Christ for their salvation, but there is *a remnant* (κατάλειμμα) of Israel that will be saved.

God, in His mercy, preserves a seed (σπέρμα) for Israel, or else Israel would be completely extinct like Sodom and Gomorrah (v.29).

Romans 11:5 “So too at the present time there is *a remnant*, chosen by grace.” (ESV, italics added)

The remnant of the chosen ones is a sign of God’s providence in the eventual realization and consummation of God’s promises for Israel and the nations. The true Israel includes both Jews and Gentiles. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything but the new creation that embodies the true Israel of God (Gal 6:15-16). The Israel of God is the spiritual Israel. “For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter.” (Rom 2:28-29)

All Israel will be saved

Romans 11:25-26 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way *all Israel will be saved*, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.” (ESV, italics added)

It is in God’s heart that all Israel will be saved. When the fullness of Gentiles comes in, God will put the focus of attention on the nation Israel.

Jesus is the Deliverer who will come from Zion to bring salvation to the entire nation of Israel. The same prophecy is predicted in Isaiah 59:20, “And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,” declares Yahweh. The Psalmist has the same longing, “Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When Yahweh restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad” (Ps 14:7).

Yahweh lays the stumbling stone

To understand Romans 10, special attention needs to be given to Romans 9:30-33. In Appendix 3, the sentence block diagram reveals Paul’s entire flow of thought from Romans 9 to Romans 10. Paul explains how Israel failed to obtain righteousness while the Gentiles were able to obtain righteousness before Yahweh God. Why such a big contrast? “Israel did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works” (Rom 9:32). The Jews pursued righteousness as though it were based on works. A man is saved not by works but by faith in God.

In God’s work of salvation, He lays a stone which people will either accept or stumble over. Who is the stone?

Romans 9:33 As it is written, “Behold *I am laying* in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” (ESV, italics added)

In Romans 9-11, Paul alludes heavily to the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 28:16, “Therefore thus says the Lord YHWH, ‘Behold, *I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: Whoever believes will not be in haste.*” (ESV, YHWH restored, italics and underline added)

The word “behold” draws your attention to the fact that Yahweh is the one who lays the stone in Zion. However, the descriptions of the stone are different. The stone can have a positive or a negative effect on the people. The positive is that it is a precious cornerstone to those who believe (Isa 28:16), but the negative is that the stone is an offence to those who stumble over it (Rom 9:33).

Paul also alludes to another passage in Isaiah regarding the stumbling stone.

Isaiah 8:13-15, “But YHWH of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.” (ESV, underline added)

Isaiah is telling the people of Judah to put their confidence in Yahweh God. To those who refuse to trust in Yahweh, Yahweh will be a stone of offence and a rock of stumbling that will crush them in judgment. Because of the stone, many will stumble, fall, and be broken. They will be totally destroyed.

In Rom 9:33, Paul is alluding to these two Isaiah passages, specifically these statements: (i) Isa 28:16a — Yahweh is the

one who lays the stone; (ii) Isa 8:14 — Yahweh is a stone of offence and a rock of stumbling.

The stumbling stone is a divine act of God:

1. Yahweh Himself is a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling (Isa 8:14).
2. Yahweh also makes Christ a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence (Rom 9:33).

The Jews actually stumbled over the person and work of the Messiah Jesus. The Jews refused to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, so they rejected him. Christ is a stumbling block to the Jews (1Cor 1:23).

In rejecting Christ, they have also rejected Yahweh God. The Jews did not just stumble over Christ, they also stumbled over Yahweh and His marvelous working in Christ.

Psalm 118:22-23, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is *YHWH’s doing*; it is marvelous in our eyes.” (ESV, YHWH restored and italics added; cf. Acts 4:11)

Jesus Christ was rejected by his own people. In rejecting Christ, the Jews were rejecting Yahweh, because it is Yahweh who laid the stone. They refused to believe in the work of salvation that Yahweh did in Jesus Christ. Christ became a stumbling stone to the Jews in their unbelief, but a cornerstone to the Gentiles who pursued righteousness by faith.

Where the Jews failed, the Gentiles succeeded and attained righteousness by faith.

The rejected stone has become “the cornerstone”. The purpose of the cornerstone is to give stability and security to the building. Jesus is the precious cornerstone. This brings to mind what Jesus said to the Pharisees regarding the stone: “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the *Lord’s doing* and it is marvelous in our eyes?’” (Mt 21:42; cf. Mk 12:10-11; Lk 20:17)

God appoints Jesus to be the chosen and choice stone for our salvation. But how can the chief cornerstone end up being a rock of offense? The teaching of Jesus is offensive to those who lack faith. They stumble and trip over him because they are “disobedient” to the word (1Pet 2:8).

Jesus becomes a crushing stone of judgment to those who reject him. Jesus said, “Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.” (Lk 20:18) Those who stumble over Jesus will fall to their own destruction. Simeon, while holding baby Jesus in the temple, recognized Jesus as the Messiah, the one anointed by God (Lk 2:25-26), for his eyes had seen God’s salvation (Lk 2:28-30). And the child is appointed “for the fall and rise of many in Israel”, a sign that is opposed so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed. (Lk 2:34-35)

To some, Jesus is the stone that causes them to stumble, while to others, Jesus is the cornerstone of their lives (Eph

2:20) such that “they will never be disappointed” (Rom 9:33; 1Pet 2:6).

The last section of Romans 9:31–33 acts as a preface to the next chapter. This section is crucial to help us understand Paul’s flow of thought to Romans 10.

Romans 10:1–13

How To Be Saved

Romans 10:13 needs to be expounded in its immediate context of Romans 10. By looking at some of the key words in Romans 10, we will be able to see significant details regarding salvation.

Romans Chapter 10 – Significant Words				
Strong's Number	Greek	Translation	Part of Speech	Occurrences
G3004	λέγω	to say, speak	verb	9
G4100	πιστεύω	believe	verb	7
G1343	δικαιοσύνη	righteousness	noun	7
G2316	θεός	God	noun	5
G2588	καρδία	heart	noun	5
G4487	ῥῆμα	word	noun	4
G2962	κύριος	Lord	noun	4
G5547	Χριστός	Christ	adj*	4
G0189	ἀκοή	hearing	noun	3
G0191	ἀκούω	hear	verb	3
G1941	ἐπικαλέομαι	to call on	verb	3
G2784	κηρύσσω	preach	verb	3
G4102	πίστις	faith	noun	3
G4750	στόμα	mouth	noun	3
G3670	ὁμολογέω	confess	verb	2
G4982	σώζω	to save	verb	2
G4991	σωτηρία	salvation	noun	2
G1125	γράφω	write	verb	2
G1484	ἔθνος	nation	noun	2
G2212	ζητέω	seek	verb	2
G2268	Ἡσαΐάς	Isaiah	noun	2
G2474	Ἰσραήλ	Israel	adj*	2
G3475	Μωσεύς	Moses	noun	2
G3498	νεκρός	dead	adj	2
G3551	νόμος	law	noun	2

* The word is technically an adjective but is used as a noun

For conciseness, all conjunctive and prepositional words are excluded from the table or else it would be too unwieldy. All the words that occur two or more times are listed.²¹

The key words in Romans 10 are: to say, believe and faith (same word family), righteousness, God, word, Lord, Christ, heart, hearing and hear (same word family), to call on, preach, mouth, confess, save and salvation (same word family). We will look at these words closely in the following exposition.

The subject of salvation threads through this section beginning with verse 1 in which Paul expresses his desire that Israel may be saved, and culminating with the final salvation in verse 13, “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved”.

Rom 10:1 ... may be **saved** (or for their salvation)

Rom 10:9 ... you will be **saved**

Rom 10:10 ... and is **saved** (or resulting in salvation)

Rom 10:13 ... will be **saved**

²¹ The statistics for the Greek words in Romans 10 are tabulated from Holman Christian Standard Bible, used by permission. I am using the 2nd Edition of HCSB (2009) whose textual source for the NT is Nestle-Aland 27.

Paul uses the word “for” (γάρ) ²² **nine times** (vv.2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 12, 13) to connect all the points in explaining how one can be saved (v.1 and v.9).

We can further subdivide Romans 10:1-13 into two parts.

Part 1: That *Israel* may be saved (v.1)

This is Paul’s heart desire and prayer for his countrymen.

Reasons (vv.1-8):

1. **For** (γάρ) they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge (v.2)
2. **For** (γάρ) they are ignorant of the righteousness of God and seek to establish their own righteousness and did not submit to God’s righteousness (v.3)
3. **For** (γάρ) Christ is the end of the law, so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes (v.4)
4. **For** (γάρ) righteousness of the law by works vs the righteousness of God by faith (v.5-8)

²² “When in successive statements γάρ is repeated twice or thrice, or even four or five times, either a. one and the same thought is confirmed by as many arguments, each having its own force, as there are repetitions of the particle or b. every succeeding statement contains the reason for its immediate predecessor, so that the statements are subordinate one to another.” (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon)

The underlying theme is that Paul prays for Israel that they may be saved. Unfortunately, Israel failed in their zeal and misunderstood God's righteousness. The Jews thought they could establish their righteousness through the works of the law and refused to submit to God's righteousness by faith.

For their salvation, the Jews needed to understand that the law has come to an end *τέλος* (*telos*). *Telos* in Greek means "a termination, the limit at which a thing ceases to be, always of the end of some act or state, but not of the end of a period of time" (TDNT). Now that Christ has come, Christ is the *telos* of the law. Paul says in Rom 3:21-22 that the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law (although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it) but the righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. It doesn't mean that the law is abolished, for Paul says to the Galatians that the law was our tutor until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith." (Gal 3:24)

Paul then makes the contrast between a righteousness based on the law and a righteousness based on faith in Christ. Israel was pursuing a law leading to righteousness but they did not succeed in reaching that law (Rom 9:31-32). Why? Israel sought righteousness in the wrong way as if righteousness were based on works. The tragedy is that external obedience to Sabbath keeping, circumcision, and observance of feasts can become outward performances without an inner heart of obedience to God (Rom 6:17). What is important is whether one is a Jew inwardly, for circumcision is a matter of the heart

(Rom 2:29). Faith begins from the heart. God wants heart obedience.

God's word has not failed. Paul alludes to Lev 18:5; Deut 30:11–14, appealing to the Jews to put their trust in the word of faith that is in their heart (Rom 10:8). It is not the obedience of works but the obedience of heart that God requires.

Part 2: That *you* will be saved (v.9)

- 1.If you confess Jesus is Lord with your mouth (v.9)
- 2.And if you believe in your heart God raised Jesus from the dead (v.9)

Reasons (vv.10 – 13):

- 1.**For** (γάρ) believing with the heart one is justified and confession with the mouth results in salvation (v.10)
- 2.**For** (γάρ) everyone who believes in him shall not be put to shame (v.11)
- 3.**For** (γάρ) there is no distinction between Jew and Greek (v.12)
- 4.**For** (γάρ) the same Lord of all bestows riches to all who call on him (v.12)
- 5.**For** (γάρ) everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (v.13)

Romans 10:9 is therefore followed by five consecutive reasonings indicated by γάρ, finally reaching its climax in Romans 10:13. We will study Romans 10:9-13 carefully verse by verse.

Romans 10:9

“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

What is crucial for salvation is that we confess that Jesus is Lord, and believe that Yahweh raised Jesus from the dead. These two statements are interlinked because if Jesus were not raised from the dead, what would be the point of calling him Lord? Christ conquered death because Yahweh raised him up. Jesus is not dead but alive today, so we can call him Lord. He is the exalted Lord. “Lord” is not merely a courtesy title but expresses that Jesus is truly the master of our lives.

In the work of salvation, Yahweh is the One who empowers Jesus by raising him from the dead. When we submit to live under Jesus’ Lordship, we also submit to Yahweh. Our faith in Jesus expresses also our faith in Yahweh.

To confess and to believe are verbs in the *active* voice, *aorist* tense, and *subjunctive* mood. It is the responsibility of the subject (“you”) to respond to God’s salvation with *active* confession and *active* believing. The *aorist* tense in Greek puts the emphasis on the action without any reference to the time

it takes to accomplish the action. The *subjunctive* mood of the verb in Greek can be interpreted as a probability or objective possibility. In this verse, under the condition of proper confessing and believing, the result of salvation should be possible.

“You will be saved” is the main clause of the sentence. The Greek word is σωθήσῃ — *future* tense, *indicative* mood, and *passive* voice. The verb in the *future* tense is dependent on the conditional “if” at the beginning of the verse. The *indicative* mood indicates the mood of assertion or presentation of certainty. The *passive* voice is used because the focus is on the action of “being saved”. You cannot save yourself. Yahweh is the One who saves you when you meet the requirements in the confession and believing.

Confess Jesus is Lord

The Christian life begins at the basic level where a public confession is made to declare Jesus is Lord and to live under His Lordship. Being a Christian is not a matter of making a decision to accept Jesus as your personal Savior. We become a born again Christian at baptism (Jn 3:5-6) when we declare Jesus as our Lord and submit our lives to live under Jesus’ Lordship every day. Lordship has to do with ownership. You don’t call anyone “Lord” unless you submit to the person’s authority. When Jesus is Lord, he is our master and we are his slaves. “Not I but Christ” (Gal 2:20). To say Jesus is Lord indicates an allegiance to Jesus who has complete command

of our lives. No one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit (1Cor 12:3). The public confession is done by faith with the inner work of the Spirit in our lives to obey all of Jesus’ teaching (Mt 28:20).

When we conduct baptism at our church, the one who gets baptized makes a pledge to God — an oath of allegiance to love God with all his heart (Deut 6:4-5) — and to submit to Jesus as his Lord. Christ Jesus is *the* Lord (Col 2:6; 1Cor 8:6).

Our faith is strictly monotheistic as Jesus recognizes the Father as “the only true God” (Jn 17:3). Jesus never calls himself God. Instead Jesus identifies himself as the Christ sent by God (Jn 17:3) which distinguishes Jesus from God. It is God who exalted Jesus to be both “Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36) but not to be a deity.

The Bible clearly tells us to call Jesus “Lord” not “God”. As Paul says, “what we proclaim is not ourselves but *Jesus Christ as Lord*” (2Cor 4:5a). Only when we are in total subjection to the Lordship of Christ can we say that we belong to God. We belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God (1Cor 3:23).

We call Jesus “Lord” because we are committed to do the will of the Father, just as Jesus did not seek to do his own will but the will of Him who sent him (Jn 5:30; 6:38). If we say “Lord Lord” and do not do the will of the Father, Jesus will say to us, “I never knew you” (Mt 7:21–23). An empty confession without doing the will of the Father is not saving faith.

Have faith in Yahweh God

It is not enough just to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ. Parallel to the confession is having faith in God who raised Jesus from the dead. This act of faith is not something theoretical but has a powerful impact on our lives. If Christ has not been raised (passive voice), our faith is in vain (1Cor 15:14) and we would still be in our sins (v.17). There is no salvation without the resurrection of Jesus.

Believing God in His raising Jesus from the dead means that we have the hope that God, in like manner, raises us up to be born again (1Pet 1:3; cf. 1Cor 6:14). Faith is required for we “*believe* and so we also *speak*, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus” (2Cor 4:13-14).

We need God’s resurrection power every day to live the new life of holiness in Christ. Only when we experience the power of resurrection today will we have the confidence that God will raise us up in the future. This means that all those who have died are still waiting for the day when God will resurrect the dead. Only Jesus, the glorified man, has ascended to heaven in the new body. All those who are dead are still waiting for resurrection to take place. To say that our resurrection has taken place is to miss the mark of truth (2Tim 2:18). Believing in the resurrection of Jesus and trusting that God will, in the same way, raise us up to a new glorified body is essential for our salvation.

Romans 10:10

“For with the heart one believes and is justified,
and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”

Saving faith involves our heart and the confession with our mouths. Whereas Romans 10:9 is concerned with the content of the confession and the believing, Romans 10:10 elaborates on the significance of the two actions in how they relate to each other for salvation.

“**Heart**” is mentioned four times in this section (Rom 10:6, 8, 9, 10). What one believes in the heart must also find expression with the mouth. When I first came to the Lord in my teens, I believed the Gospel message with my heart, but I did not want to make a public confession as I only wanted to be a secret disciple of Christ. I was not bold enough to make a public stand in front of my family and school friends. I did not want to be the oddball at school because I feared how my classmates would look at me for following Christ. Peer pressure puts us into the bondage of fearing men. When heart and mouth do not match, there is an element of reservation leading to unbelief.

“**Confess**” in Greek is ὁμολογέω (*homologeō*), a compound word with the root stem λέγω (*legō*) which means “to say or to speak”. Since *homo* means “together or in agreement,” so *homologeō* means “to speak the same thing in agreement”

(Thayer). What we declare openly with our mouths must be *in agreement* with what we believe in our hearts. What is declared by the mouth must match what is in the heart.

If our heart has unbelief and we do not have faith in Yahweh, we cannot properly profess that Jesus is Lord.

Romans 10:11

For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.”

Paul is alluding to Isaiah 28:16

Romans 10:11 picks up from the earlier text in Romans 9:33 where Paul quotes from Isaiah 28:16: “Behold I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes *in him* will not be put to shame.”

- (1) The phrase “in him” is not in the original Hebrew text of Isa 28:16 $\text{שׁוֹמֵר לֹא יִמְצָא חַטָּאת}$, which literally says “whoever believes will not be in haste”.
- (2) Paul is actually citing from the LXX text: $\acute{\omicron} \pi\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\epsilon}\upsilon\omicron\nu\epsilon\upsilon\varsigma \acute{\epsilon}\pi' \alpha\upsilon\tau\tilde{\omega} \omicron\upsilon \mu\grave{\eta} \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\iota\sigma\chi\upsilon\nu\theta\eta\grave{\iota}$. The word $\alpha\upsilon\tau\tilde{\omega}$ (in him) is added to the LXX translation, and “him” in the context would refer specifically to the tested stone that Yahweh lays for the foundation.

(3) Paul also makes a slight modification in his citation of Isaiah 28:16 from “*he* who believes” to “*everyone* who believes”. In his flow of thought, Paul is bringing in the universality of the “all” because the righteousness of God is open to *all* in Christ.

In the work of salvation, the Father and Son are involved together:

- (1) The Father is a stumbling stone and a rock of offence (Isa 8:14), and so is the Son.
- (2) What is true of Yahweh is manifested in the person and the work of Christ, the one sent by the Father.
- (3) The Son manifests the works of the Father, so to believe in the Son is to believe in Yahweh, as Jesus said, “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but *in him* who sent me” (Jn 12:44).
- (4) Believing in Jesus Christ means that we believe in Yahweh, the One who sent Jesus.

Romans 10:12

“For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek;
for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his
riches on all who call on him.”

No distinction between Jews and Greeks

The Greek word for “distinction” is διαστολή (*diastolē*) which means “a difference or a separation”. For those who are baptized into Christ, there is no more separation between Jews and Greeks for “you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). Yahweh God makes salvation available for Jews and Gentiles to obtain by faith. “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1Cor 12:13). The Father and Son work together to extend salvation to all who drink of the one Spirit. God is the One who shows no partiality to the Jews and the Greeks (Rom 2:10-11).

The same Lord of All

Some translations say “the same Lord is Lord of all” (ESV, NASB, NIV, RSV) while others have “the same Lord is over all” (MIT) or “the same Lord of all” (HCSB). In the original Greek text, the word *kyrios* occurs only once — the *same kyrios of all*.

The word “all” points to the Jews and the Gentiles. Peter said to Cornelius’ household, “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)” (Acts 10:34–36). In God’s plan of salvation, it is in Christ that salvation has also come to the

Gentiles. For Christ to be Lord of all, he has to be Lord of both Jews and Greeks (the Gentiles).

There is innumerable spiritual wealth in heaven. There are the riches of God’s kindness, forbearance and patience (Rom 2:4); the riches of God’s glory for vessels of mercy (9:23); the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God (11:33); and the riches of his glory (Eph 3:16). How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways (Rom 11:33).

There is also a whole wealth of riches in the “unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph 3:8). In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, for the knowledge of God’s mystery is Christ (Col 2:2-3). God wishes to bestow His riches to us through Christ. “And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 4:19) In the coming ages, God will show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:7).

Romans 10:13

For ‘everyone who calls on
the name of the Lord will be saved.’

Romans 10:13 is a citation of Joel 2:32 where the original Hebrew text is “everyone who calls on the name of YHWH will be saved.”

When Paul quoted Scripture, he would either quote directly, or paraphrase, or allude to a passage without telling

his readers. The LXX was often used instead of the Hebrew Scriptures. Since Paul was writing to a Greek-speaking audience, it is almost certain he used the LXX.

We can compare the Greek in Romans 10:13 with Joel 3:5a in the LXX text (Joel 2:32 in the Hebrew text corresponds to Joel 3:5 in the LXX which has a different chapter-verse numbering):

Joel 3:5a καὶ ἔσται πᾶς ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται.

Romans 10:13 πᾶς γὰρ ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται.

There is no doubt that Paul was citing from Joel. The phrase “πᾶς ... ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται” (everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved) is exactly the same in both passages.

Why is it that we don’t see the name YHWH in the LXX text? During the Second Temple era, the Jews returning from the Babylonian exile were afraid of misusing God’s Name, so they called God “Adonai” where the name “Yahweh” appears. *Adonai*, the Hebrew word for Lord, is translated *kyrios* in the LXX.²³ As a diaspora Jew, Paul was sufficiently versed in

²³ In the oldest manuscripts of the LXX, the Greek transcription “IAO” is used to translate YHWH in papyrus 4ZLXXLevB. In papyrus Fouad 266, the name YHWH is retained in Judean Aramaic script. In the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Qumran manuscripts (between 3rd century BCE and 68 CE), YHWH in paleo-Hebrew script is found

Scripture to have known that *kyrios* was the substitute word for Yahweh.

In the context of the passage in Romans 10, *kyrios* refers to Jesus (v.9, 12). In the flow of thought, *kyrios* in v.13 refers to Jesus even though the name of Jesus is not explicitly mentioned.

In Paul's writing, *kyrios* is the exalted title given to Jesus by God. God is the One who works out His salvation plan in and through the Lord Jesus. God raises Jesus from the dead. Through Christ, God's salvation is now extended to all nations. Jesus' Lordship is over all Jews and Gentiles.

In calling Jesus "*Lord*", the early disciples submit to the Lordship of Christ as Christ submits to the Lordship of Yahweh. In the chain of command, Yahweh is above all. The eternal principle of calling on the name of Yahweh for our salvation always holds true. Upon this firm foundation, we call on the name of the Lord Jesus for Yahweh saves through Jesus.

Calling Jesus as Lord

(1) Paul was exhorted by Ananias to call on the name of the Lord Jesus at baptism for the forgiveness of sins. "Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name." (Acts 22:16)

(2) The NT saints related to Jesus as *kyrios*. In his vision, Paul said to the exalted Jesus, “Who are you *Lord*?” (9:5; 22:8; 26:15); “What shall I do *Lord*?” (22:10); “*Lord*, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another, I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you” (22:19). Ananias in his vision said: “Here I am *Lord*” (9:10), and “*Lord*, I have heard from many about this man” (v.13). Stephen in his vision called out, “*Lord* Jesus, receive my spirit” (7:59), and “*Lord*, do not hold this sin against them” (v. 60). The *kyrios* whom Stephen called to is the *exalted Lord Jesus* “standing at the right hand of God” in heaven (v.55, 56).

(3) The early disciples suffered for bearing the name of Jesus. Before Paul became a Christian, he had put in prison those who “called on the name” (9:13-14, 21). At Stephen’s martyrdom, Paul was there giving approval to those who stoned Stephen to death (22:20). Following Stephen’s example, Paul was always ready to be imprisoned and even die for the “name of the *Lord* Jesus” (21:13).

(4) Paul doesn’t just call Jesus “*Lord*” but “*Christ Jesus my Lord*” (Phil 3:8). When Jesus is my *Lord*, he is the master of my life. He is my boss. He is my *Lord* and I am his slave. Jesus owns me, just as Yahweh owns Christ. You are Christ’s and Christ is God’s (1Cor 3:23). Jesus is my trusted *Lord* and I am his willing slave to serve him all the days of my life. The Greek word for slave is δούλος (*doulos*), “the one who gives himself up wholly to another’s will” (Thayer). In a practical way, for Jesus’ sake we are also slaves to those we minister to in the

church (2Cor 4:5). Calling Jesus “my Lord” is to live a life surrendered to obeying Jesus as my master.

(5) Paul often emphasizes Jesus’ corporate Lordship: “Jesus Christ *our Lord*” (Rom 1:4; 5:21; 7:25; 1Cor 1:9) or “Christ Jesus *our Lord*” (Rom 6:23; 8:39; 1Cor 15:31; Eph 3:11; 1Tim 1:2, 12; 2Tim 1:2) or “Jesus *our Lord*” (Rom 4:24; 1Cor 9:1). Jesus, the head of the body, is indeed *our Lord*.

1 Corinthians 1:2, “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of *our Lord* Jesus Christ, *both their Lord and ours.*” (ESV, italics and underline added)

The New Testament Church called on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ because Jesus is their Lord. Notice that Jesus is not just Lord but *our Lord, their Lord* and *ours*. Jesus needs to be Lord of our individual lives as well as Lord of the whole church. In these years of serving the church, my husband and I make it our priority to bring every member in the body of Christ to submit to *our Lord Jesus*, to live under the Lordship of Christ. When we yield to Jesus as Lord, our hearts are filled with love, purity and strength. We let the word of Christ fill our lives richly (Col 3:16) so that we wholeheartedly obey the teaching of Jesus daily (Mt 28:20).

When Jesus is *our Lord* in the church, the church is empowered with the Spirit to shine as light in the world. I recall many incidents in the church where the power of God’s

Spirit moved mightily among us. When Jesus is Lord in the church, brothers and sisters love God with all their hearts and love their neighbors as themselves. At communion, we constantly remind ourselves of the words of Jesus at the last supper, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another” (Jn 13:34). We have our weaknesses and often need to humbly ask for forgiveness from God and each other. Only with God’s cleansing can we work harmoniously to maintain the oneness in the body of Christ. With all our shortcomings, we are determined to let Jesus rule as Lord in our church, and to love each other with the self-giving *agape* love.

When Jesus is *our Lord*, our brothers and sisters give offerings sacrificially. From time to time, we witness large sums of offerings from individuals in the offering box. We are able to use these extra funds to support overseas missionary work, as well as partner with other organizations to sponsor two children financially in China for over 15 years.

When Jesus is *our Lord*, we are on fire for God. Our Lord Jesus always points us to do the will of the Father. We surrender our all to God. We sell all and offer up our lives to serve God. This is exactly what happened to my husband and me in 1988. Together with twelve other members in our Toronto Disciples Church (almost 1/3 of the church), we quit our professional jobs, left our comfortable homes in Canada, sold our cars, and went to Hong Kong for the full-time training to serve God. God’s power moved mightily within us

individually and corporately as we responded to God's call. Like Paul, we count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus *our Lord* (Phil 3:8).

When Jesus is *our Lord*, there is deep spiritual cleansing in the church. This is our constant experience in the life of the church as we aim to live in God's holiness. God reveals to us our hidden sins and we repent. Back in 1981, I experienced this great phenomenon of spiritual cleansing in a church during a series of revival meetings that took place in Kelowna, British Columbia. For more than a month, we met night after night at church. After an hour of preaching, the meetings would spontaneously continue on into midnight with afterglow fellowship. People did not want to leave the church because the Lord took over the meetings where people openly confessed their sins and asked for forgiveness from each other. Christians and family members confessed their faults, hatreds, jealousies, pride, grudges, and made right their relationships with one another. People were determined to make restitution for the wrongs they had done but had neglected for years. Some nights we stayed on until 2 am. Sunday worship services went on from morning into late afternoon as people shared God's work in their hearts. Nobody even cared for lunch, as the hunger was not for food but for God. I was a new member in the church, as I had just moved to that city for my first teaching job. This experience remains vividly in my mind all these years, demonstrating what God can do when the Lordship of Christ takes over in a church.

Jesus as Lord is at the very heart of the redemptive work on the cross, for the church is bought with the precious blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). We are purchased with a great price. “For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be *Lord* both of the dead and the living.” (Rom 14:9) Let Jesus be Lord of our personal lives and Lord of our church.

The name above all name

Phil 2:9-11 “Therefore God has highly exalted him (Jesus) and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (ESV, underline and parentheses added)

One day, everyone will acknowledge Jesus Christ is Lord. Yahweh gives the highest honor to our Lord Jesus with a name above every name. That day will come after Jesus destroys every rule, authority and power and delivers the kingdom to God the Father (1Cor 15:24). Jesus will reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet (v.25) and death is destroyed (v.26).

Because of Jesus’ absolute humility and total obedience to God even to the point of death on the cross, Yahweh bestows on him the name above every name. Jesus is superior to angels as “the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs” (Heb 1:4). The name of Jesus is “above every name that is named” not only in this age but also in the age to come (Eph

1:21). Jesus still retains his own name, but the name of *this Jesus* is above every name, for “at the name of Jesus” every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, bringing glory to God.

The name of Jesus

Yahweh exalts the name of this Jesus to the extent that there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved.

Acts 4:11-12 “*This Jesus* is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is *salvation* in no one else, for there is no other *name* under heaven given among men by which we must be *saved*.” (ESV, italics added)

Yahweh glorified Jesus so that by the name of this Jesus, all men can come to God for salvation. There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we can be saved. You cannot find salvation in the name of Buddha, or find salvation in the name of the Pope, or find salvation in the name of your pastor, or find salvation in the name of your church. You definitely cannot find salvation in your own name and save yourself. Only in the name of “*this Jesus*” can you find salvation.

Everything that Jesus has is given to him by Yahweh. Even the name of Jesus is given to him by Yahweh. The name of Jesus has to do with God’s salvation.

Unfortunately, the meaning of the name does not come out in the English translations. “Jesus” is derived from the Latin

“Jesus,” which in turn comes from the Greek Ἰησοῦς (*Iēsoûs*). Although the common language was Greek in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire, the Jews in Jesus’ time understood Hebrew and spoke Aramaic. Aramaic is a Semitic language that is related to Hebrew and Arabic.

Being brought up in a Jewish home in Nazareth, Jesus would have his roots in the Hebrew language. When the angel of Yahweh appeared in Joseph’s dream, Joseph was told to give the name Jesus to the son born to Mary. Jesus’ name in Hebrew is ישוע (Yeshua) for “he will *save* his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21).

Jesus’ Hebrew Name ישוע Yeshua

There is an important message in the name of Jesus in Hebrew, ישוע.

- (1) The first part יה (YH) is the short form of YHWH
- (2) The second part is the Hebrew verb שׁוּעַ (shua‘) meaning to cry for help, to deliver, save, or rescue.

“Yeshua” literally means “Yah saves” or “Yahweh saves”. The Name of Yahweh is embedded in Yeshua. How remarkable this is!

In God’s design, under heaven among men, it is only in the name of Yeshua that Yahweh saves. Every time you proclaim Yeshua, you declare the Name of Yahweh — “Yahweh saves”.

To call on the exalted Lord Yeshua, you are trusting in Yahweh for your salvation.

Yeshua always points us to Yahweh, the One who ultimately saves us. Through the name of Yeshua, we cry out to Yahweh to save us. Through Yeshua, Yahweh saves.

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (Jn 14:6) When we go to Yeshua, he directs us to Yahweh the Father.

In Jesus’ high priestly prayer, he prayed, “Holy Father, keep them in your name which you have given me (τῷ ὀνόματί σου ᾧ δέδωκάς μοι)” (Jn 17:11). What is striking is that the Father gives His Name to Jesus. It doesn’t mean that Jesus’ name becomes Yahweh but that Jesus bears the name of Yahweh. Jesus is the worthy bearer of God’s name. Jesus fully represents Yahweh God.

Jesus still has his own identity as Jesus. As the exalted Lord, Jesus has complete authority to represent Yahweh and act in the name of Yahweh. While Jesus was on earth, he came in the name of Yahweh (Mk 11:9; Jn 5:43; 10:25; 12:13) and did not act on his own authority but that of his Father.

The one who is sent has proven worthy because he bears fully the image of the One who sent Him.

Today our exalted Lord Jesus represents Yahweh in acting on behalf of His Name. The Name of Yahweh endures forever and throughout all generations (Ps 135:13).

Epilogue

From a Pastor's Heart

Calling on the name of the Lord is vital to experiencing salvation from Yahweh. Having served the church for more than 30 years now, I always feel the need to preach the Gospel message of salvation ever more clearly to our brothers and sisters, and to the world.

Romans 10:14-15 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

The Greek word “to preach good news” is εὐαγγελίζω (*euangelizō*) from which the English word “evangelism” is derived. An evangelist is a messenger who proclaims and preaches the good news of salvation. All Christians are evangelists at heart, whether they are laymen or full time workers of God.

Isaiah 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings *good news*, who publishes peace, who brings *good news* of happiness, who publishes *salvation*, who says to Zion, “*Your God reigns.*” (ESV, italics added)

The good news or Gospel is the message of salvation of God's reign. God's reign has to do with God's Kingdom.

Let's go out and proclaim the Kingdom of God and how Yahweh reigns so that all those who receive the good news will also receive God's salvation. We are called to be ambassadors of the Kingdom of God. This is so exciting.

I've been meditating on these passages in Joel, Acts 2 and Romans 10 every day for more than half a year since I started writing the upcoming book. I woke up one morning with a dream of a picture diagram that God drew for me step by step.

The first phase of the diagram is very simple. I saw heaven and earth with YHWH God reigning in heaven. Salvation is in Yahweh; Yahweh is God and there is no other:



Everyone who calls on the name of YHWH shall be saved

As shown in this diagram, **YHWH God reigns** in heaven on His throne. In the old covenant, people called on the name of Yahweh in prayer for their salvation.

(In all the following verses, YHWH is restored and boldface is added)

Psalm 3:7 Arise, **O YHWH! Save me**, O my God! For you strike all my enemies on the cheek; you break the teeth of the wicked! (ESV)

Psalm 6:4 Turn, **O YHWH**, deliver my life; **save me** for the sake of your steadfast love. (ESV)

Psalm 7:1 **O YHWH** my God, in you do I take refuge; **save me** from all my pursuers and deliver me. (ESV)

Psalm 55:16-18 But **I call to God and YHWH will save me**. Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice. He redeems my soul in safety from the battle that I wage, for many are arrayed against me. (ESV)

Psalm 109:25-27 I am an object of scorn to my accusers; when they see me, they wag their heads. Help me, **O YHWH** my God! **Save me** according to your steadfast love! Let them know that this is your hand; you, **O YHWH** have done it! (ESV)

Psalm 116:3-4 The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow. I called on the **name of YHWH**: "**YHWH, save me!**" (NIV)

Psalm 116:13 I will lift up the cup of **salvation** and call on the **name of YHWH**. (NIV)

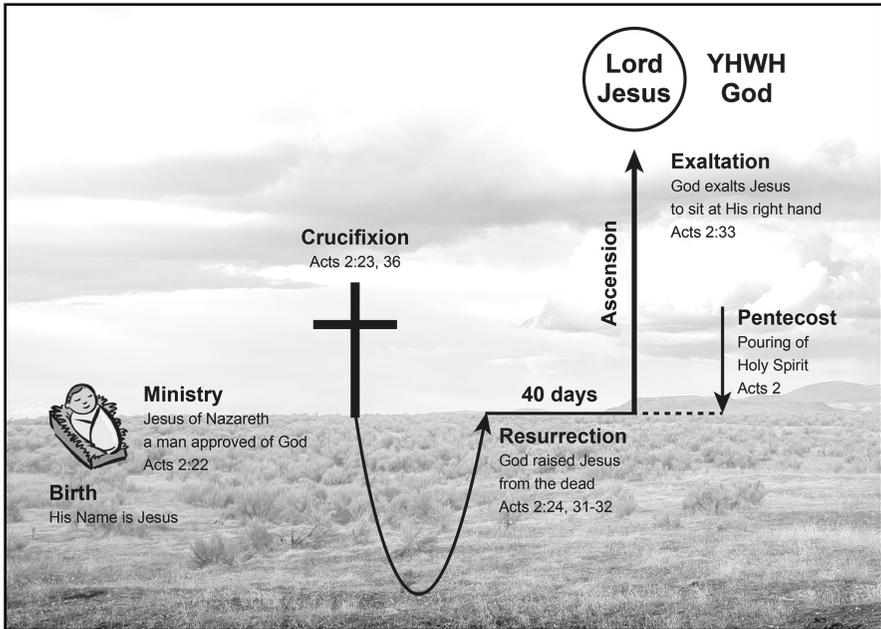
The Psalmists cry out the name of Yahweh for salvation. Yahweh saves. They trust and rely on Yahweh to rescue them from their enemies, danger, threat, disaster, military power, religion, evil, lies, diseases, oppression, false accusations, violence, sins, death, and most of all, from idolatry.

Psalm 145:18-19 “YHWH is near to all who **call on him, to all who call on him** in truth. He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and **saves** them.” (ESV)

God’s salvation is given to those who fear Yahweh and call on Him in truth. Yahweh hears their cry and saves them. Will you be one of those who call on the name of Yahweh?

The second phase of the diagram is about how God works in Jesus for our salvation. Yahweh, who is the God of Israel—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—is also the God of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the firstborn of the new creation (Rom 8:29). As the firstborn, Jesus has the highest honor, even above the angels (cf. Heb 1:4-6). Jesus is our eldest brother. Jesus is the first man who died, and was resurrected and exalted to heaven. In heaven, Yahweh is God and Jesus is Lord. There is *one God* the Father and *one Lord* Jesus Christ (1Cor 8:6). It is precisely that Jesus Christ is Lord that distinguishes him from the one God in the Bible. In fact, calling Jesus as Lord is to acknowledge that only Yahweh is the one God.

This being a book with the constraints of a book format, I can only show you the final form of the second phase of the diagram as I saw it in my dream.



Yahweh has made Jesus both Lord and Christ to reign with Him

In the dream, I saw the following procedure given to me step by step in sequence:

- (1) **Heaven:** YHWH God in heaven has been reigning alone on His throne, and God desires men to reign with Him. Adam failed but Jesus succeeded.
- (2) **Birth:** Jesus was born ~ 4 BCE. “You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” (Mt 1:21)

- (3) **Ministry:** Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience, doing God's will completely. Jesus of Nazareth was a man approved by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him. (Acts 2:22).
- (4) **Crucifixion:** Christ was without sin and became the perfect sacrificial Lamb of God for our sins. Christ died for us and atoned for our sins with his redeeming blood.
- (5) **Resurrection:** Jesus was buried, and was raised on the third day. "God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it." (Acts 2:24) David foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. God raised this Jesus up. (Acts 2:31-32)
- (6) **40 Days:** The risen Christ in his new resurrected body appeared to some women, to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, to the 11 disciples, and to more than 500 brothers. Jesus even cooked and ate breakfast with seven of his disciples in Galilee.
- (7) **Ascension:** Jesus in his new body was taken up into heaven. "And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold two men stood by them in white robes and said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? *This Jesus*, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'" (Acts 1:9-11)

- (8) **Exaltation:** God exalts Jesus to sit at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33). The Messianic prophecy in Psalm 110:1, “Yahweh said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool,” is brought to fulfillment in Christ (cf Acts 2:34-35).
- (9) **Lord Jesus:** Jesus is given the exalted title Lord. “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ.” (Acts 2:36) The words “*God has made*” hint that Jesus was not the exalted Lord and Christ prior to this point in time, but that these are new exalted titles were given to Jesus when he ascended to heaven. Notice that in the diagram, Jesus as Lord does not supplant Yahweh. Yahweh did not step out of His Lordship for Jesus to take over. They are sitting together next to each other. The exalted Jesus as Lord does not function independently from Yahweh, but alongside Yahweh to act as God’s representative on God’s behalf. Yahweh God now chooses to rule and judge through His Anointed one, His Christ.
- (10) **Pentecost:** Jesus at his exaltation received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33). Jesus then poured the Holy Spirit upon the 120 disciples in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost.

In God’s plan of salvation, Yahweh first does His work of salvation in and through Jesus. God dwells in Jesus, for God was pleased to have His fullness dwelling in Jesus (Col 1:19).

It doesn't mean that Jesus became God but that Jesus, within himself, fully manifested the glory of God (cf. Heb 1:3).

The fullness of Christ is seen in how he manifested visibly the image of God fully to us. Christians in the body of Christ are also called to be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph 3:19; cf. Eph 1:23).

Now, in this present time of God's plan of salvation, God does His saving work through the Church. Christ is the head of the Church, and we call on him as Lord, not just personally (Rom 10:9) but corporately (1Cor 1:2) for God to accomplish the work of salvation in the Church for His glory. We are exhorted to build up the body of Christ "to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13).

Jesus is our eldest brother, and we imitate and follow after him in this new creation of the Church. As we grow in the body of Christ with Jesus as the head, we call on him to be our Lord, for us to conform more and more to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29) and become more Christ-like. As portrayed in the book of Acts, the Spirit of Yahweh empowers and works through the Church in these last days. We live out the life of the Kingdom through active participation in the body of Christ with Jesus as the head.

The third phase of the diagram is very simple. Today, Jesus is seated at the right hand of the throne of Father Yahweh in heaven. Throne is a symbol of power. Right hand at God's throne signifies a place of honor and authority. Jesus is not equal to the Father but he submits to the authority of

Yahweh to be His representative to reign. God appoints Jesus to be His representative King and Lord. Everything except the Father is put into subjection to Jesus, the exalted man.



Father Yahweh exalts Lord Jesus to sit at His right hand

Whenever I swim in the ocean, I love looking up to the vast blue sky above my head. My mind will take me to the heavenly scene. Take your time to meditate on the following Bible verses that speak about the role of Jesus as he sits at the right hand of his God and Father.

Matthew 26:64 Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man **seated at the right hand of Power** and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (cf. Mk 14:62; Lk 22:69)

Mark 16:19 “So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the **right hand of God.**”

Acts 2:33 “Being therefore exalted at the **right hand of God**, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”

Acts 5:31 “God exalted him at **His right hand** as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.”

Acts 7:55-56 But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the **right hand of God**. And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the **right hand of God.**”

Romans 8:34 “Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died — more than that, who was raised — who is at the **right hand of God**, who indeed is interceding for us.”

Ephesians 1:20-23 “that He (YHWH) worked in Christ when He (YHWH) raised him from the dead and seated him at His (YHWH) **right hand in the heavenly places**, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He (YHWH) put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of Him (YHWH) who fills all in all.

Colossians 3:1-3 “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the **right hand of God**. Set your minds on things that are above, not on

things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

Hebrews 1:3-4 “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the **right hand of the Majesty on high**, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.”

Hebrews 8:1-2 “Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the **right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven**, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.”

Hebrews 10:12-13 “But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the **right hand of God**, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.” (cf. Heb 1:13)

Hebrews 12:1-2 “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the **right hand of the throne of God.**”

1 Peter 3:21-22 “Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the **right hand of God**, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.”

Revelation 3:21 “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.”

The exalted Jesus, our Lord and Messiah, is now acting as our high priest interceding for the saints. Jesus is waiting for God’s instruction to return to earth to reign on the throne of David with the saints. The literal Kingdom of God will then be manifested openly for all to see.

Yahweh God and Lord Jesus

The Greek word for God is “*theos*” which occurs 1314 times in the New Testament.²⁴ In Greek, when the definite article “ὁ θεός” (*ho theos*) is used, it should be understood literally as “the God”. “*The God*” always points to “*the one true God*” (*ton monon alēthinon theon*) whom Jesus prays to in John 17:3. Jesus is never referred to as “the God” but “the son of the God” “*ho huios tou theou*” (Jn 1:34, 49; etc) or “the lamb of the God” “*ho amnos tou theou*” (Jn 1:29, 36)” which underscores that Jesus is not God (or the God). The one who is “the son” cannot be God, just as the one who is “the lamb” cannot be God. Jesus is “the son” or “the lamb” belonging to God. Jesus is not God.

The number of occurrences of “God” in the book of Acts and Romans far exceeds the occurrences of “Jesus”.

²⁴ The statistics of θεός are tabulated from the New American Bible Standard Bible with Codes (1995) in the BibleWorks software tool.

	God / θεός	Jesus / Ἰησοῦς
Acts	167 times	68 times
Romans	153 times	36 times

The central message in Acts and Romans is about Yahweh God. Yahweh is the major focus in carrying out the work of salvation for mankind. God does His work of salvation in and through Jesus. God was pleased to have His fullness dwell in Jesus (Col 1:19), and Jesus manifested the glory of God (Heb 1:3).

The Father and the Son work so closely together for our salvation that the Gospel is sometimes known as the “Gospel of God” (Mk 1:14; Rom 1:1; 15:16; 1Thes 2:2, 8, 9; 1Pe 4:17), and sometimes as the “Gospel of His Son” (Rom 1:9) or “Gospel of Christ” (Rom 15:19; 2Cor 9:13; 1Thes 3:2) or “Gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2Thes 1:8) or “Gospel of Jesus Christ” (Mk 1:1). However, regarding “righteousness,” the Bible always speaks of the “righteousness of God” (Rom 1:17; 3:5, 21, 22; 10:3; 2Cor 5:21; Jms 1:20) but never the “righteousness of Christ”.

“The Kingdom of God,” a term which occurs 67 times in the NT, is central to Jesus’ teaching. It is striking that three times, the Kingdom is said to be that of Christ. It can be called the Kingdom of Jesus Christ because God appointed Christ to be King in His Kingdom. Peter speaks of the kingdom as the “kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2Pet 1:11). Paul calls it the “kingdom of Christ and God” (Eph 5:5). One

day the kingdom of the world will become the *kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ*, and Yahweh will reign forever and ever (Rev 11:15).

“Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body” (Phil 3:20-21). How is this possible? By the same power that enables Jesus Christ to subject all things to himself. One day, the saints of the Most High will reign with Christ in his glory and power (cf. Dan 7:27). Do you long to be part of this movement of God’s Kingdom?

Brothers and sisters and friends, one day everything will be put in subjection under Jesus’ feet, but it is plain that God is excepted who put all things in subjection under Christ (1Cor 15:27). Then the Lord Jesus Christ will hand the Kingdom over to God such that *Christ will be subjected to God* who subjected all things to him (v.28). The climax of Jesus’ Lordship is that in the end, Jesus Christ our Lord will hand over all things including himself to Yahweh the one God who is all in all (v.28). Yahweh God will dwell in Zion with His anointed and His people forever. Maranatha. Amen.

A Sentence Block Diagram of Joel 2:28–32

(Lexham English Bible)

The following Sentence Block Diagram (also known as Sentence-Flow Diagram) lays out Joel 2:28-32 in a visual format to help the reader identify its main thoughts easily and objectively. This flexible study method also allows easy identification of the main and subsidiary clauses by breaking down the sentences into small phrases. Note:

- The Bible text is taken from the Lexham English Bible.
- Gray “numerical bullets” such as [Q3] or [4] or (2) at the start of some lines itemize the points of thought made in the text. The letter “Q” denotes a question.
- Bible verse numbers such as **Joel 2:28** are placed unobtrusively at far right for reading flow.
- I rendered certain words in boldface for emphasis (e.g., **I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh**).
- Words in brackets such as [YHWH] are my editorial comments.

- Gray italics indicate words which are not found in the original language text but are implied by LEB (e.g., the word “ability” in the clause “the Spirit gave them *ability* to speak”).

Joel 2:28

And it will happen afterward thus:

I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and

your sons and your daughters will prophesy, and
your elders will dream dreams;
your young men shall see visions.

Joel 2:29

And also

on the male slaves and
on the female slaves,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

Joel 2:30

And

I will set wonders
in the heavens, and
on earth,
blood and
fire and
columns of smoke.

Joel 2:31

The sun will be changed to darkness, and
the moon to blood,
before the coming of the great and awesome day of Yahweh.

Joel 2:32

And

it will happen—

everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh will be rescued,
because

on Mount Zion and
in Jerusalem
there will be those who escape, as Yahweh said,
and
among the survivors whom Yahweh is calling.

Acts 2:5

Now
 there were Jews residing in Jerusalem,
 devout men
 from every nation under heaven.

Acts 2:6

And *when* this sound occurred,
 the crowd gathered and
 was in confusion,
 because each one was hearing them
 speaking in his own language.

Acts 2:7

And
 they were astounded and
 astonished,
 saying,
 "Behold,
 [Q1] are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"

Acts 2:8

And
 [Q2] how do we hear,
 each one *of us*,
 in our own native language?

Acts 2:9

- (1) Parthians and
- (2) Medes and
- (3) Elamites and
- (4) those residing *in* Mesopotamia,
- (5) Judea and
- (6) Cappadocia,
- (7) Pontus and
- (8) Asia,

Acts 2:10

- (9) Phrygia and
- (10) Pamphylia,
- (11) Egypt and
- (12) the parts of Libya toward Cyrene, and
- (13) the Romans who were in town,

Acts 2:11

both (13a) Jews and
 (13b) proselytes,
 (14) Cretans and
 (15) Arabs—
 we hear them speaking
 in our *own* languages
 the great deeds of God [YHWH] !”

Acts 2:12

And
 all were amazed and
 greatly perplexed,
 saying to one another,
 [Q3] “What can this mean?”

Acts 2:13

But
 others jeered *and*
 said,
 “They are full of sweet new wine!”

Acts 2:14

But
 Peter,
 standing with the eleven,
 raised his voice and
 declared to them,
 “Judean men, and
 all those who live *in* Jerusalem,
 let this be known to you,
 and
 pay attention to my words!

Acts 2:15

For
 these *men* are not drunk,
 as you assume,
 because it is the third hour of the day.

Acts 2:22

"Israelite men,
listen to these words!

[A] Jesus the Nazarene,

- (1) **a man attested** to you **by God** [YHWH]
with deeds of power and
wonders and
signs
that God [YHWH] did through him in your midst,
just as *you* yourselves know—

Acts 2:23

- (2) **this man,**
delivered up by the determined plan and
foreknowledge of God [YHWH],
(3) **you executed** *by* nailing to *a cross*
through the hand of lawless men.

Acts 2:24

[B] God [YHWH] **raised him up,**

having brought to an end the pains of death,
because it was not possible *for* him to be held by it.

Acts 2:25

For
David says with reference to him [the Messiah],
'I saw the Lord [YHWH] before me continually,
for he is at my right hand
so that
I will not be shaken.

Acts 2:26

For this *reason*
my heart was glad and
my tongue rejoiced greatly, furthermore also
my flesh will live in hope,

Acts 2:27

because
you will not abandon my soul in Hades,
nor will you [YHWH] permit your Holy One [the Messiah]
to experience decay.

Acts 2:28

You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with gladness with your presence.'

Acts 2:29

"Men *and* brothers,
 it is possible to speak with confidence to you
 about the patriarch David,
 that
 he both died and
 was buried, and
 his tomb is with us until this day.

Acts 2:30

Therefore, *because*
he was a prophet and
 knew that God [YHWH] had sworn to him
 with an oath
 to seat one of his descendants on his throne,

Acts 2:31

by having foreseen *this*,
 he spoke about the resurrection of the Christ,
 that
 neither was he abandoned in Hades
 nor did his flesh experience decay.

Acts 2:32

This Jesus

God [YHWH] raised up,
 of which we all are witnesses.

Acts 2:33

Therefore,
 having been exalted to the right hand of God [YHWH] and
 having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father,
he has poured out this
 that you see and hear.

Acts 2:34

For David did not ascend into heaven,
 But
 he himself says,

'The Lord [YHWH] said to my Lord [the Messiah],
 "Sit at my right hand,

Acts 2:35

until I make your enemies a footstool
 for your feet." '

Acts 2:41

So
 those who accepted his message were baptized,
 and on that day
 about three thousand souls were added.

Acts 2:42

And
 they were devoting themselves
 to the teaching of the apostles and
 to fellowship,
 to the breaking of bread and
 to prayers.

Acts 2:43

And
 fear came on every soul,
 and
 many wonders and
 signs
 were being performed by the apostles.

Acts 2:44

And
 all who believed were in the same *place*, and
 had everything in common.

Acts 2:45

And
 they began selling *their* possessions and property, and
 distributing these *things* to all,
 to the degree that anyone had need.

Acts 2:46

And every day,
 devoting themselves *to meeting*
 with one purpose in the temple *courts*
 and
 breaking bread from house *to house*,
 they were
 eating *their* food
 with joy and
 simplicity of heart,

Acts 2:47

praising God [YHWH] and
having favor with all the people.

And

the Lord was adding
every day
to the total
of those who were being saved.

Appendix 3

A Sentence Block Diagram of Romans 9–11

The following Sentence Block Diagram lays out Romans chapters 9 to 11 in a visual format to help the reader identify Paul's main thoughts as well as the main and subsidiary clauses, easily and objectively. Refer to the beginning of Appendix 1 for further explanation.

I am telling the truth	in Christ	Romans 9:1
— <i>I am</i> not lying;		
my conscience bears witness to me	in the Holy Spirit—	Romans 9:2
that		
my grief is great	and	
<i>there is</i> constant distress in my heart.		Romans 9:3
For		
I could wish myself to be accursed from Christ		
for the sake of	my brothers,	
	my fellow countrymen	
	according to the flesh,	Romans 9:4
who are Israelites,		
<i>to whom belong</i> the adoption,	and	
	the glory,	and
	the covenants,	and
	the giving of the law,	and
	the <i>temple</i> service,	and
	the promises,	

Romans 9:5

to whom *belong* the patriarchs, and
 from whom *is* the Christ
 according to human descent,

[Doxology to YHWH God]

who is God [YHWH] over all, blessed forever!

Amen.

Romans 9:6

But

it is **not as if the word of God [YHWH] had failed.**

For

not all those *who are descended* from Israel *are truly* Israel,

Romans 9:7

nor *are they* all children because they are descendants of Abraham,

but

“In Isaac will your descendants be named.”

Romans 9:8

That is,

it is not the children by human descent

who are children of God [YHWH],

but

the children of the promise are counted as descendants.

Romans 9:9

For the statement of the promise *is* this:

“At this time I will return and
 Sarah will have a son.”

Romans 9:10

And not only *this*,

but also *when* Rebecca conceived children

by one *man*,

Isaac our father—

Romans 9:11

For *although they* had not yet been born,

or done anything good or evil,

in order that

the purpose of God [YHWH] according to election might remain,

Romans 9:12

not by works

but by the one who calls

—it was said to her, “The older will serve the younger,”

Romans 9:13

just as it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

Romans 9:14

[Q1] What then shall we say?

[Q2] *There is* no injustice with God [YHWH], *is there?*

May it never be!

Romans 9:15

For to Moses

he says,

“I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy, and

I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion.”

Romans 9:16

Consequently therefore,

it does not depend

on the one who wills or

on the one who runs,

but on God [YHWH] who shows mercy.

Romans 9:17

For the scripture says to Pharaoh,

“For this very *reason*

I have raised you up,

so that I may demonstrate my power in you, and

so that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”

Romans 9:18

Consequently therefore,

he has mercy on whomever he wishes, and

he hardens whomever he wishes.

Romans 9:19

Therefore you will say to me,

[Q3] “Why then does he still find fault?

[Q4] For who has resisted his will?

Romans 9:20

On the contrary,

O man,

[Q5] who are you who answers back to God [YHWH]?

[Q6] Will what is molded say to the one who molded *it*,

“Why did you make me like this”?

Romans 9:21

[Q7] Or does the potter not have authority over the clay,
to make from the same lump
a vessel that *is* for honorable use and
one that *is* for ordinary use?

Romans 9:22

[Q8] And *what* if God [YHWH],
wanting to demonstrate his wrath and
to make known his power,
endured with much patience
vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

Romans 9:23

[Q9] And *he did so*
in order that
he could make known the riches of his glory
upon vessels of mercy
that he prepared beforehand for glory,

Romans 9:24

us whom he also called,
not only **from the Jews**
but also **from the Gentiles?**

Romans 9:25

As he also says in Hosea,
"I will call those *who were* not my people, 'My people,' and
those *who were* not loved, 'Loved.'

Romans 9:26

And
it will be in the place
where it was said to them, 'You *are* not my people,'
there they will be called 'sons of the living God [YHWH].' "

Romans 9:27

And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel,
"*Even* if the number of the sons of Israel is like the sand of the sea,
the remnant will be saved,

Romans 9:28

for
the Lord will execute his sentence
thoroughly and
decisively upon the earth."

Romans 9:29

And just as Isaiah foretold,
 “If the Lord of hosts had not left us descendants,
 we would have become like Sodom and
 would have resembled Gomorrah.”

Romans 9:30

[Q10] What then shall we say?
 That the Gentiles,
 who did not pursue righteousness,
 attained righteousness
 —even the righteousness *that is* by faith.

Romans 9:31

But Israel,
 pursuing the law of righteousness,
 did not attain to the law.

Romans 9:32

[Q11] Why that?
 Because
they did not pursue it by faith,
 but as *if* by works.
 They stumbled over the stone that causes people to stumble,

Romans 9:33

just as it is written,
 “Behold,
 I am laying in Zion
 a stone that causes people to stumble, and
 a rock that causes them to fall,
 and
 the one who believes in him
 will not be put to shame.”

Romans 10:1

Brothers,
the desire of my heart and
my prayer to God [YHWH] on behalf of them
is for their salvation.

Romans 10:2

For
I testify about them
that they have a zeal for God [YHWH],
but
not according to knowledge.

Romans 10:3

For
ignoring the righteousness of God [YHWH], and
seeking to establish their own,
they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God [YHWH].

Romans 10:4

For
Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness
to everyone who believes.

Romans 10:5

For
Moses writes about
the righteousness *that is* from the law:
"The person who does *this* will live by it."

Romans 10:6

But
the righteousness from faith speaks like this:
"Do not say in your heart,
[Q12] 'Who will ascend into heaven?' "
(that is, to bring Christ down),

Romans 10:7

or
[Q13] "Who will descend into the abyss?"
(that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

Romans 10:8

[Q14] But what does it say?
"The word is near to you,
in your mouth and
in your heart"
(that is,
the word of faith that we proclaim),

Romans 10:9

that
 if you confess with your mouth “Jesus *is* Lord” and
 believe in your heart that God [YHWH] raised him from the dead,
 you will be saved.

Romans 10:10

For
 with the heart one believes, resulting in righteousness, and
 with the mouth one confesses, resulting in salvation.

Romans 10:11

For the scripture says,
 “Everyone who believes in him
 will not be put to shame.”

Romans 10:12

For ***there is no distinction between Jew and Greek***,
 for the same *Lord is* Lord of all,
 who is rich to all who call upon him.

Romans 10:13

For
 “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord
 will be saved.”

Romans 10:14

[Q15] How then will they call upon *him* in whom they have not believed?

And

[Q16] how will they believe *in him* about whom they have not heard?

And

[Q17] how will they hear about *him* without one who preaches *to them*?

Romans 10:15

And

[Q18] how will they preach, unless they are sent?

Just as it is written,

“How timely *are* the feet of those
 who bring good news of good things.”

Romans 10:16

But not all have obeyed the good news,

for

Isaiah says,

[Q19] “Lord, who has believed our report?”

Romans 10:17

Consequently,
 faith *comes* by hearing, and
 hearing through the word about Christ.

Romans 10:18

[Q20] But I say,
 they have not heard, have they?
 On the contrary,
 "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and
 their words to the ends of the inhabited world."

Romans 10:19

[Q21] But I say,
 Israel did not know, did they?
 First, Moses says,
 "I will provoke you *to jealousy*
 by *those who are* not a nation;
 by a senseless nation
 I will provoke you *to anger*."

Romans 10:20

And Isaiah is very bold and says,
 "I was found by those who did not seek me;
 I became known to those who did not ask for me."

Romans 10:21

But about Israel he says,
 "The whole day *long*
 I held out my hands
 to a disobedient and
 resistant people."

Romans 11:1

Therefore I say,
 [Q22] God [YHWH] has not rejected his people, has he?
 May it never be!
 For I also am an Israelite,
 from the descendants of Abraham,
 of the tribe of Benjamin.

Romans 11:2

**God [YHWH] has not rejected his people,
whom he foreknew!**

[Q23] Or do you not know, in *the passage about* Elijah,
what the scripture says—
how he appeals to God [YHWH] against Israel?

Romans 11:3

“Lord,
they have killed your prophets,
they have torn down your altars,
and
I alone am left, and
they are seeking my life!”

Romans 11:4

[Q24] But what does the divine response say to him?
“I have left for myself seven thousand people
who have not bent the knee to Baal.”

Romans 11:5

So in this way also at the present time,
there is a remnant selected by grace.

Romans 11:6

But if by grace,
it is no longer by works,
for otherwise
grace would no longer be grace.

Romans 11:7

[Q25] What then?
What Israel was searching for,
this it did not obtain.

But
the elect obtained *it*, and
the rest were hardened,

Romans 11:8

just as it is written,
“God [YHWH] gave them a spirit of stupor,
eyes that do not see and
ears that do not hear,
until this very day.”

Romans 11:9

And David says,
 "Let their table become
 a snare and a trap, and
 a cause for stumbling and
 a retribution to them;

Romans 11:10

let their eyes be darkened
 so that they do not see, and
 cause their backs to bend continually."

Romans 11:11

I say then,
 [Q26] they did not stumble so that they fell, *did they?*
 May it never be!
 But
 by their trespass,
 salvation *has come* to the Gentiles,
 in order to provoke them *to jealousy*.

Romans 11:12

[Q27] And if their trespass *means* riches for the world and
 their loss *means* riches for the Gentiles,
 how much more *will* their fullness *mean*?

Romans 11:13

Now I am speaking to you Gentiles.
 Therefore,
 inasmuch as

**I am apostle to the Gentiles,
 I promote my ministry,**

Romans 11:14

if somehow
I may provoke my people to jealousy and
save some of them.

Romans 11:15

[Q28] For
 if their rejection *means* the reconciliation of the world,
 what *will* their acceptance *mean* except life from the dead?

Romans 11:16

Now
 if the first fruits *are* holy, *so* also *is* the *whole* batch of dough,
 and
 if the root *is* holy, *so* also *are* the branches.

Romans 11:17

Now
 if some of the branches were broken off, and
 you,
 although you were a wild olive tree,
 were grafted in among them and
 became a sharer of the root of the olive tree's richness,

Romans 11:18

do not boast against the branches.

But if you boast against *them*,
 you do not support the root,
 but the root *supports* you.

Romans 11:19

Then you will say,
 "Branches were broken off
 in order that
 I could be grafted in."

Romans 11:20

Well said!
 They were broken off because of unbelief,
 but
 you stand firm because of faith.

Do not think arrogant *thoughts*, but
 be afraid.

Romans 11:21

For
**if God [YHWH] did not spare the natural branches,
 neither will he spare you.**

Romans 11:22

See, then,
 the kindness and severity of God [YHWH]:
 severity upon those who have fallen,
 but upon you
 the kindness of God [YHWH]
 —if you continue in his kindness,
 for otherwise you also will be cut off.

Romans 11:23

And those also,
 if they do not persist in unbelief,
 will be grafted in,
 because
God [YHWH] is able to graft them in again.

Romans 11:24

[Q29] For
 if you were cut off
 from what is by nature
 a wild olive tree,
 and
 contrary to nature
 were grafted into a cultivated olive tree,
 how much more will these
 who are natural branches
 be grafted into their own olive tree?

Romans 11:25

For
 I do not want you to be ignorant,
 brothers,
 of this mystery,
 so that you will not be wise in your own sight,
 that
a partial hardening has happened to Israel,
 until the full number of the Gentiles has come in,

Romans 11:26

and so
all Israel will be saved,
 just as it is written,
 "The deliverer will come out of Zion;
 he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

Romans 11:34

[Q30] "For
 who has known the mind of the Lord [YHWH], or
 who has been his counselor?"

Romans 11:35

[Q31] Or
 who has given in advance to him, and
 it will be paid back to him?"

Romans 11:36

For
 from him and
 through him and
 to him *are all things.*

To him *be* glory for eternity!
 Amen.

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