LD 36; Ex. 3:1-15; Psalm 19; 3rd Commandment- Honoring the Holy Name I. Receiving the Name of God II. Revering the Name of God

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, every new company spends hours trying to come up with just the right name. The name of the company is how this company will be known. “Speedy Clean Windows” will tell you about the work of the company. But what does God’s name say about Himself? Well, our God is very jealous concerning the use of His name. Your name represents you as a person, and God has revealed Himself to us by giving us His name. As we come to the 3rd commandment, we remember that this commandment reads- you shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. You shall not use God’s name in a wrong manner. Previously we found that the first commandment deals with the one God in that we are to worship Him alone. How many gods are there? Just one. The second commandment deals with the proper worship of this one, true God. Man is not free to invent their own ways and means of worship. God is not pleased with idols or images as a means of worship; but rather He is to be approached and praised in a manner that aligns with His revealed Word. This week we focus on the name of God. How does God want us to call upon Him? In some ways, the 2nd command deals with the wrong way to worship- do not use idols. This week with the 3rd commandment we find the correct way to worship- by calling upon God’s name. The name of God represents Him- God’s name reveals His character, presence and work. It is often said that a rose by any other name smells just as sweet. But the fact remains, when I tell you about a rose, I still use the title of a “rose.” God has given us language as a way of expressing meaning. As an aside, that is one of the first ways that the Devil attacks truth today- by twisting words and changing meaning. What does the word man or woman mean? Can we really know what is truth? Did God really say? This is the work of the devil. So as God’s people we must know, love and defend the truth. And this commandment deals with the truth about God revealed in His name. So we consider this theme: Jesus Christ reveals the name of God for the comfort of His people.

**I. Receiving the Name of God**

In our first point we consider the receiving of the name of God. The fact is, man has not always known the name of God. Mankind by nature is born ignorant- or they suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Creation itself reveals that there is a God- God’s power and might are put on display. But the special and specific name of God is not revealed in the heavens or on earth. As Psalm 19 puts it, the heavens declare the glory of God and the skies proclaim His handiwork. But the name of God found in Psalm 19:1 is the general word for God- Elohim. The almighty One. Every nation has their own gods- their own deities upon whom they call. So how are we to know which god is the true God? In our reading from Ex. 3 we find this question answered. Moses asks in Ex. 3:14 – who shall I tell the Israelites has sent me? What is your name that I can tell the Israelites about you? The Egyptians had their own pantheon of gods- what would set apart this God from all these other gods? The answer is found in the Name! Why is knowing the name of God so important? Because the Name of God reveals His nature, covenant and relationship. This God who has revealed himself is a tender, compassionate and knowable God! Lets look a little deeper at Ex. 3 to see what Moses learns about God when God reveals His name. First off, the God who speaks to Moses is a holy God. 3:5- do not come near and take off your shoes for the place you are standing is holy. God is a holy God- set apart! God is distinct from man and from creation itself. Man cannot come to God on his own terms- and sinners need to be careful as they come into the presence of a holy God. He is a consuming fire- the God of the burning bush and the glory cloud is not to be trifled with. Second, we see that this holy God initiates contact with fallen man. It is God who comes down and appears to Moses. God who speaks, calls and sends. The true God is the one who reveals Himself in 3:4- calling to Moses from the burning bush. Third, God is knowable. Moses asks, what is your name? And God answers with a name. So God is not so far away and distant so that He remains unknowable and unconcerned. He is close and near- man can know Him! Forth- the name of God is that God is a God of presence, power and life. His name is “I AM.” In Hebrew- I AM sounds like Yahweh. The name of God is an action verb. God is not passive, but active and alive! More than that, He is present! God is the God who is real- Yahweh- or the LORD our God is His name! He is the only God who really is- the great I AM. All the other gods are fake- they are shams- they are joke! I am the only one who IS! By way of clarity- when in the OT you read the name of the LORD in all caps, this is a reference to Yahweh- or I AM. He is also the God of compassion. The fifth thing we see in our text is that God cares for His people. 3:7 says that God sees the affliction of His people and hears their cry. He is not unconcerned or uncaring but is rather compassionate and loving! It moves Him to see His people in bondage- it grieves Him to see them in slavery. But more than just seeing and hearing- He also acts! The sixth thing we find in our passage is the God is moved to action! His love compels intervention! The God who is- the great I AM- is the God who is active and at work! As 3:8 reveals, I have come down to deliver my people! I have revealed myself in order to make it known that I am about to act! I have seen my people oppressed and I will bring them out of the slavery and deliver them safely to the land of blessing and rest! This compassion is linked to the covenant. The seventh thing revealed in our text about God is that the Great I AM is a covenantal God. 3:15- I am the God of your forefathers. I am the God who covenanted with Abraham- and I am the God who makes and keeps His promises. So Yahweh is the God of the covenant people- He is the God who makes and keeps His promises. He is also the God of life. I AM- the God of being and presence- He is also the God eternal life. Jesus will use the title of Yahweh- the Great I AM- to prove that God is eternal and that God is the God of the resurrection. (Matthew 22:29-33) Here Jesus proves that God is the God of life! He is eternal and those who believe in Him also have eternal life. The Great I AM brings life to His people. The LORD God is the only God who is, and He is the forever God! As Ex. 3:15 puts it, this is my name forever! So to summarize our first point, we can see progressive revelation at work in our text. God in His grace reveals His special, specific and covenantal name. He is the great I AM- Yahweh- or as we say it, the LORD our God. God is not unknown, distant or uncaring. Our prayers are not simply throwing up empty words in the desperate hope that someone is out there listening. He is the God who sees, hears, sends, delivers and saves! He is the present and living God who acts! So His name is- I AM- so He does- I have been, I Am and I will be! He does not change, and He does not forget- as His name tells us! Jesus builds on this truth in John 8 where Jesus says of Himself- before Abraham was, I AM. Jesus reveals God to us in His word- and even proves His unity with the Father when He calls Himself that I AM. So there is only one God- the LORD our God- Yahweh. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob- and He is our father’s God. Revealed to us as the one who is, was and is to come! This is for our comfort- because as the covenantal God- He will surely save those who are His own!

**II. Revering the Name of God**

Now that we understand that God has revealed Himself to us- telling us who He is, in our second point we consider the proper response to the name of God. Children, how does Moses respond when He came into the presence of God? Well, those who come into the presence of God do well to remember who this God is! Those who hear the name of the LORD do well to respond appropriately! The fact is, God has revealed Himself to us. We have been called into His presence and even called by His name. So if you know God’s name, you are to praise Him as He deserves. Our God is holy- and His name is holy! As we have done every week- we find that there is both a negative and a positive aspect of this command. So the commandment before us says- you shall not misuse the Name of the LORD your God. Positively- you are to rightly use God’s name. QA 99- we must use the holy name of God only with reverence and awe. Many of the Psalms call for the praise of God and His name. Psalm 148 for example says, praise the LORD- Praise the LORD from the heavens. Let them Praise the name of the LORD, for His name alone is exalted. So the first fitting response to knowing God’s name is to praise that very name. To stand in awe- to revere and respect the name of God because His name and His person is holy! Second, those who know God as the covenantal LORD will trust Him to be who He says He is! Trust Him to do what He says He will do! Since the Name of the LORD is connected to His work- His faithfulness within the context of the covenant- those who know Him rightly will believe Him and trust his promises. His name itself means that He is active- assuring us that He will work! But in addition to trusting Him, we will also pray to Him. Praying in His name. As Psalm 50:15 puts it, call upon me in the day of the trouble and I will deliver you, and you will glorify me. God’s people are called to offer their prayers to the LORD. Read 2 verses from Joel 2. Joel 2:27; Joel 2:32. Note the truth of the matter- there is only one true God- the LORD God. That is His name. And also see the promise connected to His name- whoever calls upon the Name of the LORD shall be saved! It is a privilege and responsibility that we receive- the privilege is that we get to know God by His personal name! The responsibility is that we have to use that name properly! As Psalm 99:3 puts it- let them praise your great and awesome name, Holy is He!

But there is also a negative side to this command- certain aspects that we will avoid and shun. You shall not misuse God’s Name. QA 99 states that we are avoid the sins of blasphemy. What is blasphemy? The definition of blasphemy is speaking sacrilege or profane talk. Basically, blasphemy is taking something that is holy and treating is like something common- even pulling the name of God through the mud. Instead of exalting the Name of the LORD, blasphemers trample upon His name. Here Job’s wife would be an example- encouraging Job to curse God and die. Obviously, cursing God’s Name- or asking God to cure and damn others is a clear violation of this commandment. But there is a more subtle way in which this commandment is broken. Using God’s name without thinking. Flippantly using the Holy Name of God. This can be done even at church- in our prayers and singing. We become so accustomed to hearing and using God’s name that we no longer see His value and worth. Society has long used God’s name vainly- as an exclamation of emphasis. But as God’s people, we must ensure that our prayers and praise are not just vain repetition and heaping of empty words! In other words, we have to mean what we say when we use God’s name! Worshipping Him with fear, reverence and awe! Worship is not designed to make us comfortable but rather acknowledging God’s name as holy! Perjury is another sin to be guarded against. Perjury is when a person lies under oath. Specifically in the court of law, you have made a vow to tell the truth with the help of God, only to tell a lie and deceive. That is perjury. We must mean what we say here as well! Speaking the truth in love- even to our own hurt!

To conclude, we have the privilege of knowing God’s name. We tend to remember the names of the people who are important to us. It would be a sad thing to forget the names of your own spouse. But as God’s people, we are called to remember the Name of our God by keeping it held in high regard. Jesus Christ reveals the name of God for the comfort of His people. So may we honor and respect the one true God- for we trust in the name of the LORD our God!