

LD 36; Psalm 145:1-9; Matthew 10:32-33; The Name of God is Holy I. The Foundation of this Command II. The Misuse of His Name III. The Proper Use of God's Name

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what's in a name. I mean, we all have a name. Some of our names are popular- others less so. We share our last names with others- when we get married, we share our names with even more. But do we care what we are called- or how our name is used? And old saying put it like this- I don't care what you call me; just don't call me late for dinner! But is that true? Do we really not care what we are called? If you have ever been called a bad name- or cursed by another- you know how much it hurts to have your name misused. We also know that our use of names is rather fickle. People can change their names- and the names we give objects may not really fit that object. I have heard of cats being named "Dog." I have also seen really tall men get the nickname "shorty." So we use names in a rather fickle way. But today we are not free to play games with God's Name! And the names that God has are much more than our invention. So this morning we consider this theme: Jesus Christ teaches us to know and worship the name of God rightly.

### **I. The Foundation of this Command**

We begin by considering the foundation of this command. As we have seen, the first table of the Law is dealing with our love for God. We have considered who the one true God is, how we are to worship Him alone and worship Him rightly. Today we will build on this concept of right worship as we consider the worship of God by using His name rightly. Or in other words, the way in which we worship God rightly is by revering His name. So what then is God's name? Well, God's name is not unknown. Rather He has revealed who He is by telling us His name. God is not just some unknown, foreign deity looking down on us from a distance. In fact, the general name for God is a name that is used by all people. Every religion has their supposed god- so the name "god" in itself is not unique to the Christian faith. However, when Moses asks in Exodus 3 about the name of God, it is God who reveals Himself as the covenantal LORD. Here the word used for LORD- the LORD- is Yahweh in Hebrew- meaning that He is the God who is- the

great I Am- the God of being! I am who I am. He is also the LORD who is merciful and kind- the LORD, the God of your Fathers. My name is forever and it is to be remembered. Here in Ex. 3, the name of the LORD is directly tied to the covenant, Israel history, and God's continued work. In other words, God's name reveals something about who He is and what He has done. Yahweh or Jehovah is the covenantal name of God. A special name revealed to the people of God alone. He is known to His people by His special name- and He uses His name to teach His people about who He is and what He has done. His character, person and work are all tied up into His name. For example, when He says that He is Jehovah Jireh- He is saying that He is the LORD God who saves! So as God's people, we have the unique privilege of knowing God's special name. Or in the naming of child of Mary Jesus- God is revealing that it would be this child who would Save His people from their sins. The names attributed to God tell us what God is going to do! Added to that, through Jesus Christ we have been granted a further and closer access to this one, true God. When Jesus was teaching His disciples how to pray, He instructed them to pray to Our Father. In this way, Jesus was given His followers a unique privilege to call upon God as our Father- thus making us His children. This is a distinct privilege for God's people- to call God our heavenly Father! As our Father, we know that God loves us, cares for us, protects us and provides for us! This name of God- as our Father- is one that Jesus both taught us and secured for us! Except for Judaism perhaps, there is no other religion that calls God their heavenly Father! This is unique privilege and blessing! God is our Father- Christ our brother. So we can know God clearly as He has revealed Himself- and we can call upon His name as dearly loved children. So the proper understanding and use of God's name is of significant importance to us! It is Jesus that now speaks to us in His Word- teaching us about the name and work of our God!

## **II. The Misuse of His Name**

Now that we understand the foundation of this command and why it is so important, in our second point we consider how we are to avoid misusing God's holy name. As our commandment reads, you shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God. On the first level, this means that we are to avoid using God's

name wrongly which is to take God's name in vain. This means that we refrain from using God's name without thought. We refuse to drag God's name through the mud- or use it like some vain sounding, repetitious clanging. We can do this when we curse or profane His name. Now to be clear, this commandment is dealing with the name of God. Misusing God's name is not the same thing as using barn yard language or 4 letter words. That would be not advised either- but this commandment is specifically dealing with the utterance of God's name! So cursing God's name is a way that this commandment is often broken- or when people use God's names to curse others. However, we can also break this commandment when we use God's name without thought- or with constant repetition. In our prayers, the name of God is not some filler in order to avoid silence. And in our singing, God's name is not just a bunch of letters on a page. Another way in which this commandment is broken is when people lie under oath- or commit perjury. Usually a person is instructed to tell the whole truth- and they agree to do so- so help me God. So lying to a judge in a courtroom would be breaking this commandment. But any form of breaking your vow of breaking your promises is an affront to this commandment. If you have taken a vow of office within the church to serve as an office bearer; or perhaps you have made a vow to instruct your children in the knowledge of the LORD; and even when it comes to the vows uttered in the covenant of marriage. These are also solemn vows uttered in the name of the LORD and must not be broken. To promise something in the presence of God and His people only to pretend like your words mean nothing is also a misuse of God's name. Added to this, we will avoid the company of blasphemers as well. So as much as possible, we are to avoid the company of those who slander God's name. But do you think that this commandment is important? Does God take His name seriously? Well, our commandment reads that God will not hold him guiltless who misuses His name. For one example of this, consider what happened in Lev. 24. In Lev. 24 we find a young man who was the son of an Egyptian man and Hebrew woman. This young man was angry and in the middle of a fight he blasphemed the name of the LORD. He cursed the name of the LORD in the heat of the moment. Did God simply shrug this off as a slip up- did God calk it up

to anger? Was the excuse accepted that he was angry and lost control- he lost his temper- he did not mean what he said? No- not at all! Our God is a jealous God- His name is holy- and He will have His name regarded with honor! So the young blasphemer was stoned for the words that he spoke against God's name. As QA 100 makes clear, this provokes God's wrath! God takes His name serious- and so must we!

### III. The Proper Use of God's Name

So then, let's press on to consider how we are to properly use and declare God's name. As we read in Psalm 145, I will extoll you and bless your name forever. Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised. So Psalm 145 brings together the greatness of our God and the proper response which is praising His name. For how else could you praise God if not by praising His name? So the positive aspect of this command calls us to use God's name rightly and worship Him as He deserves. To honor His name because He, as our Holy God, deserves to be honored! So let's dig into this a little bit. To honor God's name is to use it only when you are using it properly. That means, first of all, that we use God's name sparingly. Now that does not mean that we avoid saying the name of the LORD God all together as the Jews would have it. No, we can and should say the name of Yahweh our God. But when you say His name, it must be with thought and meaning. Uttering His name with fear, reverence and awe. So when we say His name, we mean it! This also means that we will pray to Him alone and praise Him alone. This brings us back to the first 2 commandments, to honor God's name rightly means that we will worship Him as God alone. Praying to Him and giving thanks to Him as God. That is how we keep this commandment. How we speak to and about God reveals what we think about Him! What we believe about His person and nature will manifest itself in how we speak and in what context we say His name! Even in our singing- His name must be of such weightiness in our presence that we truly do bless and praise His name! But this praising of God's name will also lead us to confessing His name as well. We read of this in Mt. 10- everyone who acknowledges me before men, Jesus will acknowledge them before His Father in heaven. But if you deny Jesus, then He also will deny you before

the Father. To acknowledge Jesus is to confess His name before other. When we acknowledge Jesus, we are giving to Him the recognition and honor that He deserves. As our QA 99 says, we desire to honor and properly confess Him. We want God to be recognized and glorified by others as well. This will also lead us to live a godly life. We will seek to praise Him in all that we do. As Col. 3 puts it, we do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus- giving thanks to God the Father through Him. As a Christian, we bear the name of Jesus Christ. How we live is a reflection of our elder brother! As a child of God, we bear the name of the Father. How we live is a reflection of the Father of whose house we belong. In other words, if we live wicked and rebellious lives, we are giving the world a false impression of the God by whose name we are called. Our God is slandered because of our wicked actions! But if we are obedient- if we are holy because our God is holy- then the name of God is revered among the nations because of it! So all that we do should be a positive reflection of the holy God by whose name we are called! It is sort of like the last name in our household. The members of your house share the same last name. Dad, mom and the kids are all identified by this name. But if one of those members is a wicked rebel, the whole house suffers. The name and reputation of the whole house is slandered when one of those called by that household name lives rebelliously! So we do not want God's name to be slandered as we find in Rom. 2:24 which says- God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. No- it is our desire that God's name would be praised. As we find this question in Rev. 15:4- who will not fear you, O Lord, and glorify your name?! For you alone are holy!

As we close, the goal and heart of this commandment is to bring glory and honor to the Name of God! That His name would be recognized and praised as He is due! So it becomes our goal as well- that God would be glorified in all of life and His name held in reverence by all people. Jesus Christ teaches us to know and worship the name of God rightly. So glorify the name of the LORD with me- and let us exalt His name together!