

TEACHING GOAL

To study the significance of God's name.

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

- Q. Which is the third commandment?
- A. The third commandment is, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain.
- Q. What is required in the third commandment?
- A. The third commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works.

S.C. 53-54, L.C. 111-112, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 84-85

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: Jeremiah 23:5-6

Support Passages: Exodus 6:3; Psalm 83:18; Genesis 22:14; Judges 6:24; Psalm 68:4; Philippians 2:9-11

BIBLE STORY

Exodus 17: Moses builds an altar named YAHWEH NISI or the LORD is my banner.

MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

Isaiah 26:4

4 Trust in the LORD forever, For in YAH, the LORD, *is* everlasting strength.

APPLICATION

Whatever pertains to God must be used worshipfully and reverently in whatever manner used by man, for the glory of God, and the good of ourselves, and others. (See the Larger Catechism Question 112)

SUMMARY

In previous lessons we have discussed the proper name of God. This is the name above every name YAHWEH (JEHOVAH according to older translations). Since YAHWEH is related to the verb "hayah" (He is) it is probable that God's name means He Who Is, The Self Existing One, or I AM THAT I AM.¹

The study text is of special interest because therein Jesus is clearly said to be YAHWEH. The name of the "Righteous Branch" of David, speaking of Christ, is YAHWEH TSIDKENU or the LORD our Righteousness. With this sacred name, "God is thus the principle of definition, of law, and of all things. He is the premise of all our thinking, and the necessary presupposition for every sphere of thought. It is blasphemy therefore to attempt to 'prove' God; God is the necessary presupposition of all proof. To ground any sphere of thought, life, or action, or any sphere of being, on anything other than the triune God is thus blasphemy. Education without God as its premise, law which does not presuppose God and rest on His law, a civil order which does not derive all authority from God, or a family whose foundation is not God's word, is blasphemous."²

The Bible story concerns Moses, who by lifting up his hands during the early battle with Amelek, enabled victory for Israel. His uplifted hands symbolized the blessing of God upon Israel and their total dependence upon it. Without God's blessing they would have surely lost the battle. Therefore after their great victory, Moses prepared an altar to God in token of His help and called it YAHWEH NISI or the LORD is my banner. This concept is the substance of the third commandment. The help of God is not to be taken lightly, nor is He to be treated irreverently. Moses showed the utmost respect for God as he raised his hands toward Him in deference to His power.

At this point in our discussion of God's commandments it will be well to give some attention, as does Rushdoony, to the negativism of the Law and the issue is indeed a good one. What does this negativism imply, or why does God choose to express His Law negatively?

As Rushdoony argues so well,³ this negative concept of the Law confers a double benefit. First it deals with a particular evil and prohibits it, thus the Law is limited to controlling evil and not to the regulation of righteous living. It deals with the wrong doer and gives the doer of righteousness his liberty.

Secondly, therefore, the negative concept of the Law insures liberty. Except in the prohibited areas, all of man's life is beyond the Law. "If the commandment

says, 'Thou shalt not steal,' it means that the Law can only govern theft: it cannot govern or control honestly acquired property."⁴ The Law of God, though stated negatively, has an implied positive side that simply states that we are to do the opposite of what is prohibited. Godly civil government, while it punishes evildoers or in this case the irreverence of God, rewards the practice of the reverence of YAHWEH. It will not let blasphemers go unpunished while harassing Christians. This is far different from the development of a myriad of regulations aimed at controlling those who are doing what is right.

¹ Exodus 3:14

² Rushdoony, Institutes of Biblical Law, The Craig Press, 1974,

p127

³ Ibid., p101

⁴ Ibid., p102