

TEACHING GOAL

To study ways in which God's name is defamed.

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

- Q. What is forbidden in the third commandment?
- A. The Third commandment forbids all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God makes himself known.
- Q. What is the reason annexed to the third commandment?
- A. The reason annexed to the third commandment is, that however the breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment.

S.C. 55-56, L.C. 113-114, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 84-85

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: James 3:1-12

Support Passages: Isaiah 26:8,29:13; Matthew 5:33-37,23:16-23,26:63-64; James 5:12, Malachi 1:6-14,2:2,3:13-15; Jeremiah 7:4-11,30-34; Proverbs 30:9; Deuteronomy 18:10-14; 2 Timothy 4:3-4

BIBLE STORY

Leviticus 24:10-16; The son of Shelomith who blasphemed the NAME.

MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

Jeremiah 4:2

2 And you shall swear, 'The Lord lives,' In truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; The nations shall bless themselves in Him, And in Him they shall glory."

APPLICATION

We must take special care to guard our tongues with which we are so prone to curse God and mankind. The tongue, being the very world of iniquity and untamable, requires special grace and care that we should use it to bless YAHWEH and that which He has created. Let us, each one, pray God for this grace.

SUMMARY

A world of iniquity is the tongue but the tongue is merely the organ whereby the thoughts and intentions of the heart are expressed. Therefore if the name YAHWEH is defiled with the tongue it is the heart from which the evil has derived. The son of Shelomith "blasphemed the Name and cursed,"¹ for which he was put to death. So heinous is this sin that capital punishment was to be administered even to the alien who blasphemed the Name. The Name is YAHWEH. It is the name YAHWEH that is above every name, to which name every knee should bow of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth and every tongue should confess that Jesus is YAHWEH to the glory of God the Father.² The third commandment is broken, therefore, when God the Father, God the Son or God the Spirit is blasphemed.

Blasphemy (from the Greek *blasphaimo*) refers to the act of injuring the reputation of, reviling, defaming or slandering someone. We do this commonly when we "damn" someone or something. For anything or anyone to be damned to hell God must do it. Only God has the power to damn or condemn. Therefore whenever we curse in this manner we necessarily involve the name YAHWEH. All epithets that are of this nature are irreverent of YAHWEH and frivolous.

The Scribes and Pharisees would enter into legal agreements which they sealed with an oath. They delighted in taking the binding power out of some oaths which they would swear with all solemnity, yet according to Pharisaic casuistry would not mean a thing. Those who were not acquainted with this, when they heard a Pharisee swear by the Sanctuary (the part of the Temple containing the Holy of Holies), imagined that a binding oath had certainly been sworn. For what was more sacred than the Sanctuary? But no; unless the Pharisee swore by the gold of the Temple he was under no moral obligation. Such people were not merely ignorant, they were fools,³ just as we are when use the word damn but argue that it is not blasphemy because we have not attached the word God to it or that we meant god with a little "g". Jesus set the matter to rights when he said, "You fools and blind men; which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold - he who swears by the temple, swears by the temple and by Him who dwells within it . And he who swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it."

Swearing is a form of oath taking and making false or frivolous oaths amounts to blasphemy because all oaths necessarily implicate YAHWEH even when God's Name is not invoked explicitly. This follows from the Matthew passage previously adduced. An oath is an appeal to God for the sanction of the solemn declaration being made.

"Where an oath is falsely taken, it is a heaven-daring attempt to enlist the

¹ Leviticus 24:11

² Philippians 2:9-11

³ Matthew 23:16-22

Almighty in the sanction of the creature's lie; and thus it is the most outrageous levity, or the most outrageous impiety, of which he can be guilty."⁴ Masonic oaths are of this genre. Let us take note of the Word of God, "You shall not swear falsely by My Name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am YAHWEH."⁵ The view that we are not to make oaths of any kind is incorrect and unbiblical. Jesus affirmed an oath administered by the High Priest⁶ and Paul also.⁷ In fact God Himself swore an oath, "...since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself".⁸ In our common communication we are not to swear at all because the circumstances do not warrant an oath and it is therefore frivolous. But when is it appropriate what is more reasonable than to appeal to the True and Living God as a witness to the solemn declaration? Such a circumstance is, for example, the marriage ceremony.

We may believe that if we pray in Jesus' name God has to grant our request. To do so is to use God's name as a sort of charm. It is to use God's name superstitiously. We may worship God with our lips but not our hearts (Isaiah 29:13) thus making irreverent use or false use of God's name. We curse our fellow man with the same tongue with which we bless God. This too is sin. We may use God's name in idle discourse, flippantly or frivolously and so we break the commandment.

Let us therefore take heed to our tongues and sanctify our speech. Indeed, may we say with Isaiah: We have waited for Thee eagerly; Thy name, even Thy memory is the desire of our souls"⁹

⁴ Robert L. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972, p364.

⁵ Leviticus 19:12

⁶ Matthew 26:63-64

⁷ Romans 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 1:20

⁸ Hebrews 6:13, Genesis 22:16f

⁹ Isaiah 26:8