

**EXODUS 12:7**

*(Readings: WSC 53 - 56; Leviticus 24:10-23)*

**The Third Commandment**

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ...

You may hear or read - whether through the papers, TV or the radio - of a situation where someone is suing someone else.

So a person is taking that other person - or it may be a group of people, such as a company - to court to claim damages for harm which has allegedly been done.

One reason why people will sue in a public court of law is because they believe their reputation has been damaged.

They say their name has been defamed.

They go to court then usually because they're people who have to look after their reputation.

They are people of importance in our community, perhaps business leaders, political leaders, or leaders in other areas.

You see, in these court cases the person suing believes something wrong has been said.

They say that what has been stated, or even implied about them, misrepresents them.

It has been suggested that in some way they have defrauded the public at large.

Naturally, these people are upset.

Just the mere hint of something wrong could lose them a lot of public support - whether that's votes at the ballot box, or a lot of business.

Now congregation, change your focus onto our perfect God.

If anyone in this entire world - anyone at all - every deserved to sue someone else, then surely that person would have to be our LORD God.

Think of all those wars supposedly fought in His Name.

The crusades - were they biblical?

Did they really represent the best interests of God?

No way - they were totally **dishonouring** to God.

Yet it was none other than the Name of the Triune Godhead which they shouted charging into battle.

It was the LORD whose Name was muddied as they destroyed thousands of thousands of women and children, who lived in the way of their march to indulgences from the Pope granting them alleged automatic entry to heaven itself if they died in this way.

More recently there have been the wars between Catholic and Protestant in Northern Ireland.

But is it in any way honouring to God - did the bombings and the sniper attacks and assassinations promote the cause of Christ?

Of course they didn't!

Genuine Christians realise that.

But then, it's not only those claiming to be Christian who misrepresent the LORD.

There are so many non-Christian these days who everyday do the same!

I mean, when they swear by using Jesus' Name, or God's, is it to His honour?

If even a tiny fraction of all which has been wrongly said about the LORD God was spoken against the character of one of our leaders, he would be suing for trillions!

We all have to acknowledge that the LORD has been terribly misrepresented.

This is what the third commandment directs our attention towards.

So, in looking at the third commandment we'll see two things: 1stly - God's revelation of Himself **represents** who he is; and, 2ndly - the wrong use of God's Name **misrepresents** who God is.

In other words, there is WHAT GOD'S NAME REPRESENTS and HOW MAN MISREPRESENTS.

So, 1stly, we consider - WHAT GOD'S NAME REPRESENTS.

Now, we know that a name is something you are known by.

You respond when someone calls out your name exactly because that's you!

So when we call upon God's Name, we are meeting God Himself.

That's why I used the 'Votum' at the beginning of this worship service.

This is the phrase which goes, "Our help is in the **name** of the LORD...".

You see, His name represents all that He is to us.

Thus when we meet with Him we must be prepared to meet with a most holy and perfect God.

This is why Answer 54 says about this third commandment that it "requires the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works."

So this involves much more than public worship.

The same applies for all of which belongs to God.

Whenever we use God's Name we're to use it for praising and honouring Him alone.

One example is when we swear an oath in God's Name.

Now, some Christians refuse to do that.

They say that is dishonouring God's Name.

But it's actually a time when we show the utmost respect for God's Name.

Because then we do it to maintain and promote truth and trustworthiness **for God's glory** and our neighbour's good.

Congregation, God has different names.

These names, such as the Lord Almighty - Elohim, the God of the covenant - YAHWEH, Father, Messiah, Jesus, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, tell us who and what He is.

These names of God are all revelations of Him.

They show to us precious truths concerning our God.

For example, the Australian flag is more than just cloth.

It actually represents something special for many people.

This is the flag that soldiers and sailors and airman have died for.

It's the flag they held high as they fought.

In the same way the names of our God are more than words on a printed page.

Take YAHWEH, for example.

This word is translated in the NIV as the LORD, spelt in capital letters.

In Exodus chapter 3 we see what God reveals of Himself to us in this name.

Then, in response to the question that could be asked of Moses as to which God had sent him, the LORD says, in verses 14 and 15, "I am who I am.

"This is what you are to say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'

"God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers - the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob - has sent me to you.'

"`This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation."

Who is God speaking of here?

Which generations are these?

Congregation, God is speaking of His covenant people.

And so God uses for Himself the name, the LORD, to point to the fact that He is the eternal, the self-existing, the unchangeable, the ever-faithful God of His people.

In the same way, all those other names we heard earlier also represent God, and reveal His being to us.

Think of the place that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ has amongst us.

After all, we're called Christians - aren't we?

What does that mean?

It means that by faith you are a member of Christ and so share in his anointing.

You are also anointed **to confess his name**.

This is what's found on the pages of Scripture.

For example, the apostles Peter and John were once called in front of the Jewish Sanhedrin, because they were preaching the good news of what Jesus had done, and they were also healing in His name.

This is what we read of in Acts chapter 4.

The religious rulers demanded of those apostles then, "By what power or what name did you do this?"

To which Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people!

"If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and everyone in Israel: It is by the **name** of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you completely healed.

"He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.'

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other **name** under heaven given by which we must be saved."  
(Acts 4:8bff.)

That name "Jesus" means "Saviour", because Jesus did come and save His people from their sins.

As His people we confess His Name to show that.

But we also know what Jesus had to go through to secure for us our salvation.

Jesus Christ, the very name of God, was jeered at, spat upon, and mocked by us.

And it continues to be done by the blasphemy spoken all around us!

All of which brings us to our second point...

HOW MAN MISREPRESENTS.

Earlier I mentioned the example of how the Australian flag represents something special for many people.

But imagine that someone took the Aussie flag, and they trampled upon it, rubbed it into a muddy puddle, and then burnt it.

Hey - that's a lot more than another piece of cloth!

They're insulting the very identity of this country!

So, how do you think God feels when men use His Name in a wrong way?

I mean, mankind was created after-all to worship and praise God.

Yet what do we see all around us?

It seems that the conversational ability of many non-Christians isn't complete unless every second word is blaspheming the Name of God.

The television and movie standards have even been changed so that this profanity is quite acceptable.

Imagine, though, that when those people swore, instead of using God's Name, they used someone else's.

"Ouch, John Smith!"

"Aargh...Susan Jones!"

How about, "Oh, Mohammed!"

Or, "Allah!"

Do they?

No way!

Satan is using these pagans to slander God's Name.

After all, Satan is **the great liar**, against God's Holy Name.

That's why people profane the name of God!

That's why we Christians are to testify to God as our Lord.

So those who slander show Satan as their Lord!

As Christians we're **not** to allow this evil to continue.

We're not to let Satan do what he likes.

We're to stand up and make our voice heard against blasphemy - wherever we might meet it.

It defames God and it means that they will end up in court too - though then it won't be about being sued!

I'm not saying this is an easy thing.

But it is absolutely necessary - as essential as His salvation, for that has changed our lives around!

Indeed, when we challenge them on their blasphemy isn't that witnessing to them?

Yet, there is something else that we mustn't forget in regards to this commandment.

Like all the commandments it was addressed to the covenant nation - God's own people.

We saw how seriously the LORD emphasised it in Leviticus 24.

Now, today, each one of us here is a part of God's covenant community.

The Church is God's covenant nation of this time.

So we must first of all see how this commandment is to apply to us now.

If God regarded blasphemy with such seriousness that in the Old Testament it was punished by stoning, how do we avoid doing such a great wrong?

If God tells us in this third commandment that He won't hold anyone guiltless who misuses His Name, what are we **not** to do?

Isn't it sometimes easy to be relaxed about our Christian attitude?

Could it be us who sometimes call our Lord Jesus just plain J.C. and leave it at that?

Is God the Man upstairs?

And what about those T-Shirts or fancy posters with God's Name used casually?

And as we enter into His Worship, as we come on to His holy ground, do we take off our filthy shoes?

By not paying attention when we're in prayer, by not focusing on who should be at the centre of our worship, we also break the third commandment.

When we sing the psalms without thinking, do we realise what we're actually doing?

You see, while the 1st commandment considers God as the object of worship; and the 2nd is about worship and the way we do it; this 3rd commandment is about using God's Name and the attitude with which we worship.

When we don't have the right attitude we can go against what we should be as Christians.

Then we don't show the Christ in our title of 'Christian.'

Then our worship isn't a witness - in fact, it's quite the opposite!

Congregation, let's not dishonour our God, but rather let's honour our God for who He is - the Name above all names!

Salvation is found in no other Name!

Amen.

PRAYER:

Let's pray...O Great God, the LORD over all...

You whose Name is ever to be adored...

Please stir in us a fresh awareness of who You are.

Change our attitude so that we respect Your Name for what it is; the way that you represent Yourself to us.

Lord, may we be able to hold high the honour of Your Name in a world where it is so dishonoured.

Help us to fight the attack of Satan in this through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.