

## The Third Commandment: Idolatry

The Quality of Our Worship

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It is not all that difficult to make a judgment as to what is the most common of all sins. It is idolatry. This is a sin of commission. Five commandments bear directly on it: one, two, three, four, and ten. In addition, it is also quite easy to involve the others by breaking them in their spirit.

Today we are going to focus on a commandment whose purpose I feel is generally misunderstood by many. In fact, most of us understand it only in its most obvious application, and thus unknowingly may break it very frequently.

Remember that the first commandment deals with *what* we worship—the unique Creator who is the Source of everything. The second commandment deals with the *way* that we worship, and that worship must be in spirit and in truth. It is the third commandment that we are going to be dealing with today, and it has to do with the *quality* of our worship. It has to do with glorifying God.

I want you to turn to a scripture we used last week, and we will use it as a springboard.

**Isaiah 40:18** To whom then will you liken God? or what likeness will you compare unto him?

**Isaiah 40:25** To whom then will you liken me, or shall I be equal? says the Holy One.

It is obvious from the second commandment that God expressly forbids the making of any representation of Him, because any physical representation of Him is automatically a lie, and this is because, other than knowing that we are in His physical image as to form and shape, everything else that He is cannot be expressed by mere physical representation. That is why God said, "To whom then shall I be equal?"

What are you going to do to make a picture, a sculpture, or anything like that, in form or shape that you can say would honor, would be comparable to Him"? That is a truth we have to accept and make use of.

From here I want you to go the book of John. Much of the sermon is going to bear on

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what it says in John 1:18. Verse 18 confirms what we just mentioned, but it says:

**John 1:18** No man has seen God at any time, . . .the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him.

So how can any *true* representation of Him be made if no one has ever seen God? Any representation is automatically a lie.

**John 1:18** . . . the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom [meaning a close relationship] of the Father, he has declared him.

In other words, He is someone who can describe God because of the quality of the relationship that He had.

God is unique. There is nothing that we can compare Him with. There is no point of contact, no physical reference to which He can be compared, thus showing us the absolute folly of image-making.

On the other hand, Jesus' declarations regarding God are *all* about His authority, His position, His purpose, His character, and His attributes and qualities. So should we not make effort to learn and understand what God is like? Not what He looks like, but what He is *like*? There is a big difference between the two.

It becomes obvious that God does not want us concerned about what He looks like. That puts the emphasis in the wrong area, but He gives us enough information for us to know that He looks like a man, and that is enough. Maybe it would be better to say He looks like a human, and get the gender thing out of here, although He reveals Himself primarily in the male gender. He is also the One from whom *females* were designed. He is the image of both ultimately.

Despite not giving us hardly a thing to know about what He looks like, He very much wants us to know what He is like. In fact, the entire Bible is a revelation of the mind, the character, the attributes, His offices, His power, His will, His promises, His plan, and His relationship to us. It is these areas of study and application that the third commandment is concerned with.

Let us to turn to Exodus 20 to the statement regarding the third commandment.

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**Exodus 20:7** You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain.

This commandment, like the second, has a warning included with it. What does He mean by "guiltless"? Sometimes I think that God deliberately understates a warning really as a subtle form of emphasis which ultimately magnifies its meaning, because brethren, the penalty is death.

There are four words in this commandment that I find it helpful to define. The first one is the word "take." "You shall not take . . ."

There are 74 different Hebrew words in the Old Testament that are translated into the one English word "take." This particular one means lift up, bear, carry, use, appropriate. "You shall not appropriate the name of the Lord your God." "You shall not use the name of the Lord your God in vain." "You shall not bear, you shall not carry, you shall not lift up the name of the Lord your God in vain."

Now how about the word "vain"? The underlying Hebrew word provides a sense of emptiness, futility, falsehood, depending on the context in which it appears. It implies that which lacks reality, that which lacks value, that which lacks truth. Its single-word synonym with the English language, depending upon the context in which the Hebrew word appears, is "futile." "You shall not lift, carry, or bear the name of the Lord your God in futile ways." It is whatever lacks reality, is worthless, profane, foolish, reproachful, curse, blasphemous, purposelessness, uselessness. It implies that which is unsubstantial, inconsequential, vaporless. There is nothing there to relate to reality.

The third word is "guiltless." This is the easiest one. Interestingly, it indicates that which is free. God will not hold us free if we break the proper use of His name. He will not hold us free, clear, innocent, clean, blameless. We will not go unpunished. It is pretty powerful here.

Then there is the word "name" itself. A Hebrew root denotes something that is high and elevated, like a monument, implying majesty or excellence. It is a mark, a sign of repute. It is something that stands out, and thus "name" is a word by which a person, place, or thing is distinctively known and identifies, signifies, specifies, and describes. There is a lot just in those definitions.

The third commandment has nothing to do with the proper pronunciation of His name, because nobody knows that anyway. It has nothing to do with superstition or magic. The

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application of this commandment is much broader, deeper, and a great deal more dignified than that.

It pays dividends in insight and understanding to pay attention to biblical names, and this is because in biblical thought a name is not merely a label of identification. It is an expression of the essential nature of its bearer, and includes within it the bearer's reputation, character, as well as distinctiveness from others.

For example, Adam, in all probability, named the beasts based upon his observation of the distinctiveness of their nature; that is, what they looked like and what he saw them doing. He said, "Oh, that's a lion." "That's a dog," and so forth. He was making use of the knowledge, the information that had either been put into his mind by God, or that he had learned in his relationship with God. In like manner, to know the name of God is to know God as He has revealed Himself, just like these animals revealed themselves to Adam. So to know God's name is to know some of His nature. How much, is a question. But the more we know about His name, the more we know about His character, and the more we know about His nature, the better off we are going to be.

Here is an illustration. Twice Jacob supplanted his brother Esau. A supplanter is one, who by skill, deceit, or force, takes the place of another. The second time this occurred, Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob?" Jacob twice took Esau's place (1) with the birthright and (2) the blessing by means of his conduct. His conduct caused this occurrence, and so God named him "supplanter" right off the bat.

Here is another one that we all know. When Abigail was before David, pleading for Nabal's life, she said, "As his name is, so is he." Nabal means "folly." We would call such a person today a "dolt." Nabal was a vile person of surly nature, doing stupid things, and so that was his name: Nabal. Thus the Bible shows that a name tends to exercise constraint upon a person to conform to his nature. That is very interesting. Be very careful what you name your children, because it does have some subtle effect. We will get to something like that a little bit later in the sermon.

In biblical usage, to cut off a person's name is to end the existence of the bearer. They no longer exist. Or, to change a person's name indicates a change of character and standing before God. This is one of the better-known aspects of it.

Let us go back to something that is kind of exciting in the book of Revelation. It is exciting and kind of serious at one and the same time. Remember, all these things have somewhat of an attachment to God's name and the third commandment.

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**Revelation 3:12** Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

This is very interesting. The Philadelphians are going to receive, upon inheriting the Kingdom of God, three new names from God. Those names reveal the very existence, nature, and responsibility of those great beings in God's kingdom. We have that to look forward to. Maybe we will not have all three names, but maybe we will get at least one new name. God is going to give it to us, and whatever it is, it is going to fit us like a tee, and I hope it is a good one. I am sure it will be because God is very careful about naming His children.

To speak or act in another's name is to act as the agent of that person, and to participate in his authority. If somebody comes to you "in the name of God," it is not his or her name, but that person bears the authority of Almighty God in his use of that name.

To be called by another's name implies ownership *by* that person, and the one bearing that name comes under the authority and protection of the one whose name is called upon. But always we want to bear the name of God with us, and because of that, we then come under His protection as sons of God.

The third commandment sets the standard of one's spiritual cleanliness in one's use of the name of God; and that is, whether it is used, or borne, or taken up, or carried in truth or vanity. Why so? Simply because God's name is weighty. There is no name in all of creation that is more weighty than the name of God. This indicates that a man or a woman is better off being sincerely wrong than to be a professing Christian and *denying* His name by the conduct of his or her life. That is because, if the person is truly converted and then denies the name of God in his or her conduct, God will not hold that person guiltless, because that person is tarnishing the family name.

If a person does that innocently, ignorantly, and really does not have the name of God, but just thinks he or she has the name of God, that person is better off than the person who is converted and really *is* bearing God's name, but is denying the name of God by his or her conduct. In one sense, it puts us into a precarious position. It does put stress there to make sure that we bear the name of God rightly, honestly, and in dignity.

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Herbert Lockyear's book, *All The Divine Names and Titles*, lists 364 names and titles for Jesus Christ. It is through His name and titles that God has chosen to reveal much about His attitudes, offices, authority, prerogatives, and will. Each name of God is given to set forth some distinct virtue or characteristic of His nature, and so God has made known the glory of His nature by His 364 names. If this does not shake you up, none of those names is to be abused.

I am sure grateful that God is merciful, and that He takes into consideration in His judgment our impotence, that He is merciful and kind and gives us time to learn and grow.

Like I said earlier right at the beginning of this sermon, this is a commandment that is very easily broken, but it is the one that sets the standard God wants us to strive for in our relationship with Him and in the witness that we make to the world, and that is to pay serious attention to His name and the way we use it in our lives. We have a great deal to learn in relation to the proper use of this commandment.

The third commandment is certainly against common swearing, and that includes the use of euphemisms that are so common in this Protestant society—words like gee, gosh, and golly, cheese and rice, and got-almighty, or got-all-muddy. Jiminy Cricket and doggone are real common examples. It also includes the light or disrespectful use of any of the attributes or character of God; and it is this commandment more than any other that shows how much God is to be a part of our every word, deed and attitude.

Now consider this: In order for us to know David, the Bible shows him to be a shepherd, a warrior, a king, a prophet, a poet, a musician. He was a father, and he was a son as well. Each part of his life reveals a rich and varied nature. Now God is manifold times greater than David, and thus the Bible reveals His nature in much the same way as David is revealed. So God names Himself what He is, even as He names people what they are. Jacob is a supplanter. Israel is one who prevails with God.

Let us go to a terrific Psalm.

**Psalm 8:1-4** LORD, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth! who has set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have you ordained strength because of your enemies, that you might still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained; What is man, that you are mindful of him? and the son of man, that you visit him?

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Modern translations replace the word "excellent" with terms like glorious, great, or majestic. "Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic, how glorious, how great is your name."

The glory of God is revealed by His creation, and one of His names of course is Creator. The psalmist has the starry heavens stretched before him as an awesome and spectacular showcase of the majestic power of God.

The *Soncino* commentary translates it this way: "Whose majesty is revealed *above* the heavens." In other words, the psalmist is looking at the heavens, and yet God is greater. You see, His name is *above* the heavens. Now how can that be? The reason is, as majestic and great and beautiful and awesome are the heavens, any creator is greater than what he produced, what he creates. That goes with the occupation. As great as the creation is, the One who made it is greater, and so the *Soncino*, understanding that, recognizes it by translating it that way.

His name is *above* what He created, and yet we look at the creation out there, and what man is finding out about it, and how vast it is, and how beautiful it is, and what power it took to create it and put it there, and put everything working in a systematic orderly way, and its billions of light years. We have not found the end of it yet. How important is God's name? What a comparison! His name is greater than one of the greatest things that we are aware of.

So what excellence or glory do we see in the Earth and the sky? Carry your mind's eye beyond that and understand that the Creator is greater than what we able to create in our minds of what we see out there.

Each of us does comprehend at least some small measure the power, the order, the beauty, the loving providence, the wisdom, the reason, the logic, and the vastness of thinking that is revealed by the heavens *if* we make the effort to seek it out.

Does the creation help us to know God if we do not look at the creation in such a way so that we are looking for God in the creation? God made these things so that we would understand something about *Him*, the Creator, and if it does not do anything except humble us to make us realize how weak, powerless, insignificant we are in comparison to the little we are able to comprehend, then, you see, it has done some good towards His kingdom. That is exactly why David said in verse 4, "What is man that You are mindful of him?"

Do you think David knew how many light years it was from here to there? Highly unlikely, but what he was able to comprehend... well, you have got to give him credit

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that this stunningly revealed to him what he was by comparison. Whether he was a king, a shepherd, or whatever, had he ever done anything that would even begin to compare with what God did? Out of it came respect, reverence, awe, and a willingness to submit his life before the One who could display out there what He was able to do.

That Great God has called you and me, and it is in all likelihood we are even less than what David was. What do we have to offer God except a life? That is exactly what He wants, and if we will do that and really give Him our life, we have got all eternity to learn how to do what He did, and maybe follow in His footsteps, as it were, in doing that.

This psalm is intended to direct a person's thinking toward God's greatness and puny man's insignificance, and that is very important to this life. And so that great majestic God of such awesome glory is glorifying Himself in man through the means of creating in us the desire to be like Him. Is it working? Do you really want to be like Him?

It is understandable that this is something that is really in a way beyond us. We can only grasp the finite edges, but what God has given us to enable us to see even this is enough to get started. It all comes down to this. Once He has revealed Himself, are we willing to work with Him to learn more? Is this not what Paul said in I Corinthians 3? "We are co-workers together *with* Him." This puts the onus in a sense on us, because it is His name by which He reveals Himself, and so knowing His name is of supreme importance to us if we are going to bring glory to Him by pursuing after the opportunity to learn more about that name.

I will tell you, we are dealing with something here that is awesome in this very much overlooked third commandment. This is the one that determines the quality of our witness before God. You see, our part of keeping it is to seek after Him. Man will not do this willingly. God has to create in us the impetus to do it by revealing a tiny, tiny bit of His mind. He has, of course, the hope to excite us enough to go beyond that little revelation that gets us started. If we do not seek after Him, I can tell you this, that we disappoint Him very much. Our part is so small in one sense, but yet it is so important.

Let us go to Psalm 23. Generally, an awfully lot of people say this is their favorite portion of the entire Bible.

**Psalm 23:1-6** The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: he leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul: he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me. You prepare a

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table before me in the presence of my enemies: you anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

I do not know whether you are aware of it, but the 23rd Psalm—this much beloved psalm—is actually an exposition. It is an expounding of eight of God's names. I am not saying that those names appear in this psalm, but what you read in the verses is an expounding of those names.

Verse 1 expounds *Yahweh Raah*. (Variant spelling is *Yahweh Rohi*; *Yahweh Roeh*) That word means "God our Shepherd." It indicates a guide. God is not only a Creator, He is shepherding. He is guiding us to His kingdom.

Also in verse 1 is *Yahweh Jireh*: "God is our Provider." He is the One who sees. This name really comes to the fore in Genesis 22, when Abraham was about ready to sacrifice Isaac, and boom! Suddenly there was a lamb there for him to sacrifice rather than his son, and Abraham turned right around and he named the place *Yahweh Jireh*: "God saw that I had need, and He provided."

In verse 2 *Yahweh Shalom*: "God is our Peace." Gideon used this in Judges 6:24 to rally the troops. "God our peace is with us."

In verse 3 *Yahweh Rophecha*: "God is our Healer." Physically and spiritually He is our healer.

Also in verse 3 is *Yahweh Tsidkenu*: "God our Righteousness." It indicates a deliverer.

In verse 4 is *Yahweh Shammah*: "God who is with us."

Also in verse 4 is *Yahweh Nissi*: "God my Banner"—a source of encouragement

In verse 5 is *Yahweh Mekoddishkem*: "The God who sanctifies you." This verse incidentally appears in the Sabbath covenant—Exodus 31:13. He says, "I am the Lord that does sanctify you," and one of the major ways that He does is through the Sabbath. The Sabbath sanctifies us away from the rest of the world.

We are now going to go to Psalm 18:1-3. One of the reasons I am going through these psalms is to show you that David knew God's name, and he used it frequently. It is what he prayed about. He called to God through his understanding of what God's name

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means.

**Psalm 18:1-3** I will love you, O LORD, my strength.

He really did not say "I *will* love You." He *already* loved Him! What he said there in the Hebrew is "God, I *fervently* love You!" That is what it really says, and then he goes on and expands upon this, and says:

**Psalm 18:2** The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

Most of them have to do with giving him safety.

**Psalm 18:3** I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies.

David expresses that he loved God with fervency, and then follows this up with a torrent of names, thus showing that David understood God's attributes as expressed by His names, and David trusted what those names told him.

In like manner, if we are going to learn here, we are to seek God when in need in areas in which He has revealed Himself to us as skilled and willing to help. But what if we do not know what God can and will do for us? Boy! We are up the creek without a paddle, aren't we? This is why we have to seek Him so that we know what He will do for us, and His names tell us.

We are now going to go to Exodus 33:9-18. If you are at least somewhat familiar with the subjects of the chapters in this area, Exodus 32 is the area in which Israel made the golden calf. So brethren, if I can put it this way, and you will understand, even though the Bible shows that when Moses came down he was hot and angry, yet, at the same time, his heart was broken. He did not really know what to expect was going to happen next, and so what we see here is this dialogue that takes place between Moses and God.

**Exodus 33:9-18** And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the

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Lord talked with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door. [They were afraid after what they had just witnessed already!] And the LORD spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaks unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle. [I do not know why they stuck that in there. Someday we will understand why it tells us Joshua stayed there.] And Moses said unto the LORD, See, You said unto me, Bring up this people: and You have not let me know whom You will send with me [to make sure we get there]. Yet You have said, I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight. [God said those things to Moses.] Now therefore, I pray you, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You, that I may find grace in Your sight: and consider that this nation is Your people. [Moses is appealing for the people, that God does not just blast them out of existence. So God comforts him with the following words.] And He said, My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest [peace of mind]. And he [Moses] said unto Him, If Your presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. [In other words, "Blow us out of existence right now."] For wherein shall it be known here that I and Your people have found grace in Your sight? is it not in that You go with us? [Moses was pretty bold here.] so shall we be separated, I and Your people from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that you have spoken: for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name. [God is saying here, "Moses, you are My friend. I know you inside and out."] And he [Moses] said, I beseech You; **show me Your glory.**

This is what we are leading to. What does God consider to be His glory? This is what God is going to do. He is going to show Moses His glory.

**Exodus 33:19-23** And he [God] said, I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And he said, You cannot see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and you shall stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passes by, that I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and will cover you with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

So God then gave Moses instructions at the beginning of chapter 34.

**Exodus 34:1-5** And the LOORD said unto Moses, Hew you two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which you broke. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me in the top of the mount. And no man shall come up with you, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount. And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto Mount Sinai, as the LOORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone. And the LOORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LOORD.

Now here comes God's glory.

**Exodus 34:6-8** 6 And the LOORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LOORD, The LOORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.

Do you know what God did? God preached Moses a sermon on the third commandment on the name of God. When we come to understand it, that is His glory expressed 364 times in the Bible, each name representing a tiny portion of the character, the mind, the nature of God. Each one of those names means something to us about Him. For us, brethren, it is more than we can learn in a lifetime. His glory, brethren, is expressed by His name, or His names, because they describe *Him*.

We like to say that the Ten Commandments describe the character of God, and that is certainly true, but the names of God expand that out so far that we can spend a whole lifetime seeking after it, and still we have only scratched the surface.

Specifically, in this instance, He expounded eleven attributes: Yahweh El—the merciful Being; the gracious One; the longsuffering One; the mighty One; the bountiful Being; the

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true One; the Preserver of bountifulness; He who bears away iniquity, and He who visits iniquity.

God did not give Moses a demonstration of His power and majesty, but rather of His love of His way of relating to His creation. Do you understand that? That to Him is what His glory is. It is the way He relates to what He has made. **He loves it!** Is that not the way creators are? They love their creation. But how many creators are willing to die for what they have made? How many creators are willing to put up with what they made, when we, His creation, are so stiff-necked, so hardheaded, so impatient, so lazy, and yet He continues to draw us along because He loves us so much.

It really is such an awesome thing, that in the face of the golden calf, God turned around and did what He did. So in effect, He was telling Moses, "Don't worry. I am not going to blot you out. I am going to get you there. I am going to complete My work." That is pretty comforting, because, you see, the end result, if I can put it this way, is His glory. That is *us* being fully-spiritual members of His family, but it takes an awful lot of doing on His part in putting up with us to get us there. Not many human parents would be willing to put up with what *their* children do the way we treat God.

Let us go to Matthew 11. Earlier in the sermon I introduced to you a verse you are familiar with—John 1:18—where it says that "Jesus has declared the Father." That is very important to us because we cannot see God, we cannot be as close to God as Moses was, and besides that we have an additional, I guess you might say, difficulty that we have to overcome in that we are looking at a book which is no longer in its original language. It is not *our* language. It has been translated into English, and sometimes the translations are really not as adequate as what God originally gave in the Hebrew language, so much that what we see in the Bible can be very vague in the English language. So where does that leave us who are three or so millennia away from Moses seeing God's backward parts and having a sermon preached to him? This is where Matthew 11 begins to come into the fore here.

**Matthew 11:25-27** At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in your sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

Now again, recall John 1:18 where John dogmatically states that the Son declared the

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Father. This is what the ministry of Jesus Christ was largely about. Jesus revealed the Father. In other words, what am I saying? In Jesus' ministry—the Gospel of Jesus Christ—He revealed the family relationship that is open to you and to me, because, before that, God was not a father of children. Before that, God was not even the Father of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ did not become the Son of God until He appeared on earth as a human, and *then* He became the first and the only begotten Son of God uniquely, and now we are following in His stead if we will follow Jesus Christ, who is the Revelator of the Father.

**John 14:5-10** Thomas said unto him, Lord, we know not whither you go; and how can we know the way? Jesus said unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you should have known my Father also: and from henceforth you know him, and have seen him. Philip said unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us. Jesus said unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip? he that has seen me has seen the Father; and how say you then, Show us the Father? Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwells in me, he does the works.

The long and the short of this is this, that through the life and the work and the words of Jesus Christ, the Father is revealed, or declared.

Now Moses asked God to show Him His ways. If we want to see what God is like, if we want to see the mind of God, the nature of God, if we want to see the whole attitude, Jesus said, "Look at Me. If you have seen Me, you have *seen* the Father."

To condense this, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," did He not? He is the way, because only He, of all of mankind, has intimate knowledge of God that is unmarred by sin. Every other human being gives a deficient picture of God, but Christ does not. What He does, then, is He shows us the way men must live. He shows the direction, the manner, and the method of doing things. The way to God's kingdom lies in following the knowledge of the truth about Him. Jesus said also, "I am the truth." This is precisely the knowledge that Christ gives to His brothers and sisters.

I will give an illustration. Maybe it is simple, but I think it is right. There may have been a time in our life where we were in a strange city. I do not mean the city itself was strange, but we were strangers there. We did not know anything about the city, and somehow maybe we were having a little bit of difficulty finding our way around, and maybe we

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stopped at a curb somewhere and asked somebody for directions.

The chances are very great that the person we asked was very familiar with his city, and he says, "Well, you go down here three blocks, hang a right, and go right past that Exxon station. You will see it as you go by. Just go past that Exxon station three traffic lights, and then you want to hang a left and go around there. You will see a big church with a steeple on top. It is the Lutheran church. It has a big red door on the front of it." Anyway, he goes all through those directions, and it is very likely that by the time you hang the first right you are already lost.

Now what is the difference between asking directions in a city in which you are a stranger and when you ask Jesus Christ for directions on the way to God, to the Kingdom of God? Jesus said, "Follow Me. I will take you there." That is the difference. He does not just give directions. He may give directions, but He also goes with us, just like He did in the wilderness when He was in the cloud and was in the pillar of fire. He was always there. That is the kind of leadership He will provide for those who are seeking God. It is a way, brethren, that we have never gone before. It is strange to us. It is new to us, and just giving us directions is not good enough for God. He says, "Follow Me."

If we want to understand the name of God, His attributes, His character, His personality, His nature, what He will do, why He will do it, and so forth, we have a Comforter to go with us. Do you know what I have just told you? It is right there in John 14 if you will just chase it out. He said, "When I go back to the Father I will send you a Comforter." People think that this is the third person in the Trinity, but if we just let Jesus explain, He goes on to say, "**I will come to you.**" **He** is the Comforter! It is not a third person in a Trinity, it is Him. He says, "I will come and make My abode with you," and then He expands it out further, and He says, "Both the Father and I will come and make our abode with you." What leadership we have provided for us, because God wants to make sure that we glorify His name, and we can be then in His kingdom.

Some people may teach truth, but Jesus embodies it. He *is* truth. A person—man or woman, it does not matter—may teach algebra, or geometry, or calculus, or whatever, and that person's character does not cover what he teaches. The person who is teaching can be a rascal, and all he is doing is teaching you something about science or mathematics, but anybody that teaches things that are of moral, ethical, and spiritual value, that person had better be what he is teaching, because if he is not, it is going to color the way that he covers the subject. It will color.

But now that we are dealing with Jesus Christ, He *is* the way, He *is* truth. He is life

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inherent, and we can be absolutely certain of what He teaches to us. We find the way Paul confirmed this to us in Colossians 1:15-16.

**Colossians 1:15-16** Who is the image [talking about Christ] of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.

What a pedigree!

**Colossians 2:9** For in him dwells [lives] all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Write that word "Godhead" right out of your mind because it does not belong there. "...the fullness of the **God-nature** bodily." He was the perfect exemplar of all of the mind, all of the character of divinity, of the Deity, of God that could be jammed into a single human being. That is what the New Testament reveals. It is revealing the name of God in the person of Jesus Christ. So He does not merely reflect godliness, or reveal God in His teaching, **He was God in the flesh**. That is what His name means—Emanuel: God with us.

With these things in mind, could God possibly have provided us with more to ensure that we will respect, honor, and reverence His name? I do not know what more He could do and still allow us the opportunity of free moral agency. We have the freedom to choose, but we have it at our fingertips if we will just seek after Him. The answers are there. The guidance is there. The teaching is there. We can actually see it, as it were, in the mind's eye in the life of Jesus Christ, so we have every opportunity to really come to know God. I think that you understand John 17:3: "To know God *is* life eternal." He did not say to know the sound of God's name is life eternal; it is "to **know God** is eternal life.

I want to conclude by stringing a number of Scriptures together.

**Proverbs 22:1** A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold.

This verse says that one's name might be considered a person's most valuable asset.

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You can pick up on this by just thinking about how often God says, "For My name's sake I am doing this." God is always looking out to protect His name. This begins to become very personal.

These verses show whom He is addressing in this chapter.

**Isaiah 43:6-7** I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

In verses 10 through 12 God make it clear. He says, "You are My witnesses that I am God."

**Isaiah 43:10-12** You are my witnesses, says the LOORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LOORD; and beside me there is no savior. I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore **you are my witnesses**, says the LOORD, **that I am God.**

He is depending upon us and has made this a responsibility that we are to witness for Him. Please understand that it is learning God's name, His attributes and so forth, that give us the opportunity to know what our responsibilities are, and what we need to trust in. This is going to determine the quality of our witness before God. The third commandment is what sets the standard, the measurement for the witnessing, the glorifying of God *through* our witness. But see, right bound within this is the responsibility of seeking after God so that we know what we are to witness to before the world.

In Romans 2:7-14, Paul uses that context to show very clearly that God's name is hallowed or profaned by one's conduct.

**Romans 2:7-14** To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honor, and

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peace, to every man that works good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves.

**Isaiah 48:1-2** Hear you this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the LOORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The LOORD of hosts is his name.

In this context it shows people who were standing on their name as bearers of the name of God and the name of Israel. But God shows in that context that their words, actions, and attitudes did not live up to the majesty of *either* name. This becomes very important, because in the New Testament the church becomes "the Israel of God," and so he is showing us we bear the name of God, and therefore we are responsible for glorifying the church and God by our witness.

In Ezekiel 36:16-23 God accuses Israel of defiling the land and God's name at one and the same time by their conduct. Of course that led to their going into captivity.

**Ezekiel 36:16-23** Moreover the word of the LOORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it: And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the LOORD, and are gone forth out of his land. But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus says the Lord GOOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the heathen, whither you went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the

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heathen, which you have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

**I John 3:1-3** Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure.

This is kind of interesting, because people spend their lives chasing after a name that will bring them a measure of honor or notoriety. They want to be associated with a name, a university, a name-team, a name-company. They want to wear clothing with a certain name on its label, or drive a name-automobile, or marry into a certain family name. But the greatest name anybody could possibly bear comes to us unbidden. It was God who chose us, and so what one of the things John is doing in those verses is exhorting people to remember their privileges in bearing that name. He says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." There is no greater family name in existence. That is the way he starts that off.

There is a paradox in all of this, and that is that in order to be able to see God we have got to be like Him. Now carnally, by contrast, we think that in order to be like Him we have got to see Him. That is the way the carnal mind works. But God says "No." He has chosen to operate His purposes through man by faith without us ever seeing Him even one time. This is how He is going to find out how we *really* think about Him.

The eye, of its own, is always attracted to beautiful things. There is nothing more beautiful than God. There is nothing more beautiful to appreciate than His character and what He is, but we have to trust Him without ever seeing Him. Jesus even said in that last prayer to the disciples that "Blessed are those who believe in Your word without ever seeing Me." We have to come to know Him and love Him without ever seeing Him. That goes against human nature.

Salvation is by grace through faith. He has revealed what He is by His names and by the life of Jesus Christ. By faith we can emulate Him by means of His spirit that empowers us. Now if we saw Him in the flesh—that is, in our flesh—our curiosity would be satisfied just like Israel in the wilderness. They saw these amazing things that He did, and then almost probably forgot about it. If we saw Him in the flesh our curiosity

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would be satisfied, or we would be so overwhelmed by His perfection we would give up, like Isaiah [who] flopped on the ground and covered his eyes. God's way is best because it really puts us to the test, but a test that is not so strong that we cannot get through it as we grow in grace. And so He tells us in Malachi 3:16 that those who are going to be preserved at the end are those who meditate on His name.

**Psalm 34:1-3** I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.

"Hallowed be Thy name!" is that model-prayer's opening line. Isn't that interesting that Jesus put that right at the beginning so that we would be reminded every day to hallow His name.