

# WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

## SHORTER CATECHISM

### LESSON # 30 (Q3LES5)

#### THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE LORDS NAME IN VAIN

1. **Prayer**
2. **Bible reading: Ezekiel 36:16 - 24**
3. **Review:** In our last lesson, we discussed the second commandment. We learned that while the first commandment addresses the object of worship, the second commandment deals with the means of worship. God tells us how he wants to be worshiped in his word, and we are required to receive, observe, and keep pure and entire all forms of religious worship that is directed in His Word. We looked at what is forbidden by the second commandment, and found out that it extends way beyond just the worship of idols and images, to include all profaning of anything whereby God maketh himself known. We discussed the reasons attached to (annexed) this commandment, learning that they are: God's sovereignty over us, his ownership (read propriety) in us, and that God, as our God, demands not only that we worship Him, but gets angry when we worship any other god.
4. **Introduction:** This week we will discuss the third commandment, looking at SC questions 53 through 56. This is also an interesting commandment, with significantly more meaning that it sounds like from an initial reading.

#### 5. **Questions:**

**Question 53:** Which is the third commandment?

**Answer:** The third commandment is, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*

**Question 54:** What is required in the third commandment?

**Answer:** The third commandment requireth the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word and works.

**Question 55:** What is forbidden in the third commandment?

**Answer:** The third commandment forbiddeth all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God maketh himself known.

**Question 52: What is the reason annexed to the third commandment?**

**Answer: The reasons 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 judgement.**

## **6. The SC and the LC.**

The third commandment is covered in the SC and the LC with four very similar questions. SC questions 53 and 54, and the corresponding LC questions 111 and 112 are the same. SC questions 55 and 56 are nearly identical to LC questions 113 and 114, the LC differing only in some minor rewording. All the answers in the LC, while covering the some material, are greatly expanded. I could not find any specific reference to this commandment in the WCF.

## **7. Worship in the third commandment**

a. What is the between the worship of God required in the third commandment, and that which is required in the first and second commandments.

- Worship in the first commandment deals with the object of worship.
- Worship in the second commandment deals with the means of worship.
- Worship in the third commandment deals with the manner of worship, requiring that it be performed with humility and holy fear, with sincerity, fervency, and all kinds of holy affections.

b. What is TV saying here? Is there a clear understanding of what is meant?

## **8. Taking God's name in vain.....**

a. To properly understand this commandment, we must first understand the meaning of the word "**vain**". Would anyone like to take a shot at a definition of vain?

Again to my trusty Webster's New 20<sup>th</sup> Century dictionary. The first definition: *empty; worthless; hollow; having no genuine substance, value or importance.*

The first synonym: empty

So what we are talking about here, is a showing of disrespect toward God. The use and portraying of Him and all he has created as empty, useless, of no importance.

## 9. What does God require by this commandment?

- a. Both the SC (Q54) and the LC (Q112) agree that this commandment requires the holy and reverent uses of God's name. (**Psalm 96:8 "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts."**)
- b. What are the words "name of God" meant to include?
  - The SC Q54 says: names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word and works. Scripture proofs are offered for each point.
  - LC Q112 expands on this, saying, "*The third commandment requires, That the name of God, his titles, attributes, ordinances, the word, sacraments, prayer, oaths, vows, lots, his works, and whatsoever else there is whereby he makes himself known, be holily and reverently used in thought, meditation, word, and writing; by an holy profession, and answerable conversation, to the glory of God, and the good of ourselves and others.*"
  - And the key: in SC q55 and LC q112: **whatsoever else there is whereby he maketh himself known.**
- c. "Any other way God maketh himself known". How does God make himself known. In accordance with SC q54....
  - His name. God's name: God, Lord, I Am, Jehovah, and others, There are a lot of scripture proofs for this one. I liked (**Exodus 3: 13 & 14** "<sup>(13)</sup>**And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name: what shall I say unto them?**"<sup>(14)</sup>**And God said unto Moses, I Am that I Am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you.**)
  - His titles. What are some of God's titles? Lord of Lords, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and others. Again, many scripture proofs. (**1 Tim. 6:15** "**Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;**")
  - His attributes. What are God's attributes? His perfections and properties by which he distinguishes himself from his creatures. Omnipotence, eternity, invisibility, infinite wisdom, omnipresence, holiness, unchangeableness, etc. (**Rev 15: 3 & 4** "<sup>(3)</sup>**And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.** <sup>(4)</sup>**Who shall not fear thee, O lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgements are made manifest.**")
  - His ordinances. What are God's ordinances? SC q88 identifies them as: the Word, Sacraments, and prayer. (**Mal 1:11, 14** "<sup>(11)</sup>**For, from the rising of**

***the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts. <sup>(14)</sup> But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen”***)

- By his Word. His law and gospel. (Psalm 138: 1 & 2 “<sup>(1)</sup> *I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. <sup>(2)</sup>I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.”*)
- His works. What are God’s works? Remember SC q8. How doth God execute His decrees? God executeth his decrees in the works of **creation** and **providence**. (Psalm 19:1 – “***The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.***”)

#### **10. What sins does God forbid in this commandment?**

- a. The SC sums this one up easily for us laymen, simply stating: “*The third commandment forbiddeth all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God maketh himself known*”
- b. The LC goes into significantly more detail, stating: “*The sins forbidden in the third commandment are, the not using of God’s name as is required; and the abuse of it in an ignorant, vain, irreverent, profane, superstitious, or wicked mentioning or otherwise using his titles, attributes, ordinances, or works, by blasphemy, perjury; all sinful cursings, oaths, vows, and lots; violating of our oaths and vows, if lawful; and fulfilling them, if of things unlawful; murmuring and quarrelling at, curious prying into, and misapplying of God’s decrees and providences; misinterpreting, misapplying, or any way perverting the word, or any part of it, to profane jests, curious or unprofitable questions, vain janglings, or the maintaining of false doctrines; abusing it, the creatures, or any thing contained under the name of God, to charms, or sinful lusts and practices; the maligning, scorning, reviling, or any wise opposing of God’s truth, grace, and ways, making profession of religion in hypocrisy, or for sinister ends; being ashamed of it, or a shame to it, by uncomfortable, unwise, unfruitful, and offensive walking or backsliding from it.*”
- c. Remember, the “name of God”, as used here, means anything whereby he maketh himself known.
- d. So this commandment forbids anything which goes against the name of God. It includes many things which we do not ordinarily think of as violating this commandment. This is very all inclusive; it’s hard not to break this one. Where does this leave most of humanity these days?

## 11. Reasons attached to this commandment.

- a. The reason annexed to this commandment are interesting. First, it points out that, while this commandment is frequently abused, it is uncommon for man to be punished by man, even men of authority, for violation of this commandment. There are a few words that you can be punished for using, primarily in the media, but none of them are reference to God's name, as defined above.
- b. It also notes that, while you may have escaped judgement from men, you cannot avoid the punishment from God. God is infinitely righteous, and He cannot hold one guiltless, who takes His name in vain.
- c. God may punish you here on earth. **(Deut. 28:58 – 59 <sup>(58)</sup>*If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, The Lord Thy God; <sup>(59)</sup> Then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long continuance.***
- d. Or, if you have not been saved by the grace of God, your punishment may be a lot longer and severe. **(Rom 2:5 *“But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God;”*)**

## 12. SUMMARY

- a. The third commandment has to do with the manner of worship. It requires that everything about our Lord, His names, titles, attributes, ordinances, Word and works be approached with holiness and reverence. It forbids all profaning or abusing of anything whereby he maketh himself known. Finally, we are reminded, that while we may escape punishment from men for abuse of this commandment, God, being perfectly righteous, will not allow us to escape his judgement.