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Issue 5

HONOURING THE NAME OF GOD

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The third commandment engraved in stone was a warning not to take the name of the Lord in vain (Exodus 20:7). This directive is followed by a warning that God "...will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." The word "vain" is defined as "unreal, flippant, empty, light or profane." Even though the Christian is no longer bound by the Law of Moses, it is clear from a study of the Law of Christ that God expects any references to His name, and character, to be expressed in a manner that brings glory and honour to the Almighty. This article contains just a few of the many ways the Lord's name is used in a profane manner. Let us take great care when, and how, we use the name of God lest we find ourselves among those on the day of judgement who are not found guiltless. Therefore, every Christian must strive to make a conscious effort to avoid using the name of God in the various ways that are discussed in this article.

In the first place, the use of God's name in jokes and secular songs deprives God of the reverence He deserves. Paul warned that "foolish talking" or "jesting" must be avoided (Ephesians 5:4). One would be hard pressed to think of anything more foolish and disrespectful than to ridicule the Lord, or make light of His directives. In Matthew 12:36, 37, Jesus declared that man shall give an account for every idle word that he has spoken. Think twice before you are tempted to tell a joke, or sing a secular song that incorporates some reference to God, His disciples, or His word.

In the second place, when one uses the name of God in a flippant manner, he is guilty of invoking the name of God in a vain and empty oath. Jesus said in Matthew 5:34, "But I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne..." Jesus was forbidding the practice of calling upon God to witness an oath that one has no intention of keeping. This command forbids one from calling upon God to witness some silly or frivolous action. One violates this command when he uses phrases like "Oh my God," "Heavens above," or "Hallelujah" (praise to God) to express his emotions of surprise or shock. These constitute empty appeals or prayers to God. One is not any less guilty of vain oaths, or empty appeals when he employs a euphemism for God's name like "Gosh," "Golly," "Gee," or "Geez."

In the third place, a Christian who uses the name of God in an inappropriate context is displaying hypocritical behaviour. He declares the blessings of the gospel, but out of the same mouth he blasphemes, curses, and swears vain oaths to God (James 3:10; Luke 6:46). He claims to honour, respect and obey God, but then employs language that treats the name of God as something that is common or base.

The one who uses the name of God in a profane manner is one who does not have complete control of his mind. Aside from showing that he has no respect for the Almighty, he is also demonstrating his ignorance. There are over four hundred thousand words in the English language yet many people cannot even utter a half a dozen words without employing the use of offensive terms and the vain use of the name of God. Our language is a sign of what is in our hearts (Matthew 12:34; Ephesians 4:29). Do we truly love and respect God? If we do respect God, as we claim, does our language reveal a truth that contradicts that claim? In our speech and in our conduct we must strive to bring God the honour that is due to Him. Always keep in mind that the name of God is "hallowed" (holy, sacred) (Matthew 6:9). 

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WHAT CONSTITUTES MARRIAGE?

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Marriage was ordained in the Garden of Eden by God (Genesis 2:23-25). It provides man with suitable companionship (Genesis 2:18), and a secure environment for raising children (Genesis 1:26-28, Psalm 127:3-5; Psalm 128; Malachi 2:14-15). The attack by Satan on the home today is relentless, and has caused much confusion. Many do not even know whether or not they are actually married. Let us therefore go back to Bible basics to define what constitutes marriage.

MARRIAGE IS AN INSTITUTION OF GOD: *“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”* (Matthew 19:6). No man or government has authority to join people in marriage or grant a divorce without God’s approval.

MARRIAGE IS REGULATED BY THE LAW: *“The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.”* (1 Corinthians 7:39) *“The law”* here is **God’s law**. An example of an unlawful marriage is that of King Herod to Herodias. Even though they were married and divorced according to the law of the land (Mark 6:17), John the Baptist still told Herod that *“It is not lawful for thee to have her”* (Matthew 14:4). Notice also that although Herod was not a Christian, he was **still accountable to God’s law of marriage**. Christians and non-Christians alike therefore are accountable to God in their marriage.

Christ stated that **fornication is the only ground** for divorce and remarriage. Any married person who has not divorced their spouse for fornication is living in adultery. *“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her who is put away doth commit adultery.”* (Matthew 19:9). (See also Matthew 5:32, Romans 7:2-3).

MARRIAGE IS UNDEFILED AND HONOURABLE: *“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”* (Hebrews 13:4). To be valid it must be honourable in all (**i.e. before both God and man**). All societies require some form of legal marriage

ceremony that is publicly witnessed and accepted. If a marriage has not complied with the legal requirements of the land, it is not honourable before men. Defacto relationships do not constitute marriage.

The motor car is a great blessing to man if driven responsibly. Imagine, however, what carnage would result on our roads if all men were free to drive cars without a licence. In the same way, sex, if confined to the marriage bed is honourable and undefiled, and should be practiced freely and romantically. (See also 1 Corinthians 7:7:3-5; Song of Solomon 4:8-16). Fornication and adultery, however, have devastating fruits. Broken homes, parentless children, crushed spirits, suicide, loneliness, disease, and murder are just a few of the consequences.

MARRIAGE IS FORMED BY COVENANT: It is not formed by the first sexual union. *“Yet ye say, ‘Wherefore?’ Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.”* (Malachi 2:14) (See also Proverbs 2:17-18). Marriage is actually a three way covenant. The man, woman, as well as God, must all agree. Also, the couple become husband and wife at the ceremony, not in the honeymoon bed. Sex does not form the marriage, but is a blessing within the marriage.

THE MARRIAGE IS BETWEEN MAN AND WOMAN: *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”* (Genesis 2:24). Many governments today are actually legalising homosexual marriages. Same sex unions are described in the Bible as vile, unnatural and sinful, and therefore can never form any part of a valid marriage (Romans 1:26-27).

Let us close with an admonition from the proverbs to married people. *“Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?”* (Proverbs 5:18-20) 📖