**FOR EVERY IDLE WORD (#4)**

***Number 3 On God’s Top Ten***

With his sandals off and his head bowed in reverence to the ground Moses heard the thundering voice of God speaking from the burning bush. Down below the children of Israel were terrified of the sights and sounds they witnessed coming from the holy mountain. There were peels of thunder, flashes of lightening, a thick cloud descending, a trumpet blasting louder and louder, the mountain quaking, and smoke completely covering the entire scene as God came down in fire. In that sacred setting Jehovah God spoke these words:

*“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain!”*

We are all used to hearing “Top Ten” lists in so many areas of life. The Top 10 highlight plays on ESPN. The Top 10 songs. The Top 10 books. The Top 10 destinations. The Top 10 baby names. The Top 10 movies. But when God wrote His Top 10 Commandments He inscribed them in stone to last 1500 years. But they are so foundational to Who God is that they were written into the New Testament of Christ to guide us to the end of time (yes, I know, Saturday the Sabbath was changed to Sunday the Lord’s day). If we do a countdown from 10 to 1 we get all the way to numbers 3, 2, and 1 to find that loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength are “*the greatest commandments*” of all (Luke 10:27). In our countdown, let’s come to #3.

God’s “name” is not just a few letters of the alphabet mixed together in a certain order to spell a proper name. Rick – Irck – Crik – Kric could be spellings of my name, depending on how you shuffled the letters. But my “name” is more than the sequence of letters, it is who I am. Few, if any, name their children Judas or Jezebel today. Why? Those names live in infamy for their treachery. But many name their children Joseph, John, James (and Jesus’ if Spanish) or Mary, Elizabeth, Abigail and Sarah because their character was exemplary from the Bible. Their names projected who they were. Thus is it so with God.

God holds a copyright, a patent, on His name. His trademark answer to Moses’ question, “*When the people ask me ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them*?” – God replied, “*I AM WHO I AM*” (Exo. 3:13-15). Jehovah (YHWH) was to be known as the eternal one, without beginning, without end. He is the sovereign, self-existent One.

“*O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth*” (Psa. 8:1).
“*Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name*” (Psa. 29:2).
“*Hallowed be your name*” (Matt. 6:9).
“*His name shall be Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of
 Peace*” (Isa. 9:6).
“*You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins*” (Matt. 1:21).
“*The name by He is called is The Word of God… On His robe and on His thigh He has a
 name written: King of kings and Lord of lords*” (Rev. 19:13,16).

If God’s name represents the entirety of WHO He is, and we see the Israelites assembled at the foot of that holy mountain where God came down to meet them, we can surely appreciate the fact that for centuries the Jewish people revered His name. Many of the ancient Israelites were so respectful of God’s name that they would not even pronounce it in public or write it for fear of taking it in vain and receiving His wrath. Those who did write it would often throw away the quill because they thought if it had written His holy name, it should not then be used to write common words.

When told “*You shalt not take the name of the Lord God in vain*” they soon learned that was a crime worthy of capital punishment. Leviticus 24:10-16 reveals an example of a man who blasphemed God’s name with a curse. He was put in custody while Moses asked God for the penalty. God said, “*“Take outside the camp him who has cursed; then let all who heard him lay their hands on his head and let all the congregation stone him. “Then you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death.”* Whoa! Even a casual listening in today’s world would fill the cemeteries to capacity!

Jesus said, “*For every idle word men may speak they will give account of it in the day of Judgment; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned*” (Matt. 12:36-37) An idle word is a vain word. To take God’s name in vain is to use it in a way that lowers Him from the glory and majesty He deserves. To use His name in a flippant, irreverent way might not bring immediate death as it did to that generation, but it will be recorded in God’s book and brought to remembrance when you stand before Him (2 Cor. 5:10). Christ said our words will either justify us or condemn us. How we use God’s name will reflect how we thought about Him, either in holiness or profanity. Which brings me to my point.

“Oh my God!” (or its social media equivalent #OMG) seems to be the most popular exclamation of surprise on planet earth these days. It’s almost predictable that will be the immediate response when someone is startled, shocked, stunned or scared. If I were a betting man I would make a fortune taking odds on what most will say when astonished. Kissin’ cousins to that favorite phrase would be “Oh Lord,” then “Good God,” then “Good Lord,” and finally the old standby, “Lord have mercy.” Others flippantly use “Jesus” or “Jesus Christ” as swear words. Millions (billions) daily drag God’s holy name, and all His name represents, through the pig stye. A name that is meant to be used in hushed tones and reverent fear is so trivialized as to make it meaningless. ***Blasphemy***! is what it is.

Satan, “*the ruler of this world*” (Jn. 12:31), will likely drag as many souls into hell with irreverence towards God’s name as he will with almost any other work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). To hear the world speak with such a disrespect for God by using His name in such worldly ways should make our blood curdle. When we speak of God we should with every breath, every syllable, remember David’s words: *“He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever:* ***Holy*** *and* ***awesome*** *is His name”* (Psa. 111:9).

*“as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”* (I Pet. 1:15-16)

**Speak holy words of our holy God today. – Rick**