

The Name JESUS

Luke 2:21, New Year's Day

January 1, 2008

Beloved of the Lord....In our catechism, the question is asked, "Why was it necessary for our Savior to be true man?" *It was necessary for our Savior to be true man, A. That he might take our place under the Law.* And we heard in our Epistle reading on Sunday, "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem the that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Jesus was made under the law, that is He placed Himself under God's Ten Commandments, in order to fulfill and keep the law for all men. His active obedience under the law began, when He was circumcised in Bethlehem, on the eighth day of His earthly life. This shedding of blood pointed ahead to the cross, where He would also shed His blood to redeem mankind from sin. His blood was "given and shed for you, for the remission of sins."

On His day of circumcision, as was the custom and practice of the Jewish people, his name was then "called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb." Thus when a Jewish child was circumcised, he formally was declared a member of the Jewish church, and given a name. Naturally God had already named this holy child Jesus, and both Mary and Joseph knew well why. "For He shall save His people from their sins."

This name Jesus, is a special and holy name to this day, for it is one of the very special names that God has chosen for Himself. While God identifies Himself with many names in the Bible like Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, when we identify the second person of the Holy Trinity, we commonly use the name Jesus. The Greek word Jesus is pronounced *ee-ay-sooce'* which is taken from the Hebrew word *yeh-ho-shoo'-ah*, which is Joshua. And so Joshua means salvation and Jesus means both salvation and Savior. For when the angel told Joseph to name Mary's child Jesus, God's own definition of Jesus was given, "for He shall save His people from their sins." And so the name Jesus grants us a picture of salvation,

deliverance, even liberty. For by fulfilling the law in our place, and they dying under the law in our stead, Jesus has liberated us from our bondage to sin and Satan, and now we are free to serve the Lord with gladness! Thus, to the sinner who knows his sins, there is no better name than the name Jesus.

Yet even we who are called by this holy name Jesus, in that we are called Christians.....we often dishonor God's holy name by our sin. And truly it grieves God in His heart to hear His own children abusing His holy name. For His name is so holy that He gave us the Second Commandment saying, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain." We should fear and love God that we may not curse, swear, use witchcraft, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks." Now I know, sometimes we think to ourselves, "But I don't curse and swear like other people do, my mouth is clean. I do not swear and say *O my God* or *Jesus Christ*, or *Good Lord*." But here we ought to remember that sin does not begin with the lips, but it begins with the heart. Our abuse of God's name then is far worse than we realize.

For example, when I was a child it was common to say, "Oh shoot" whenever something went wrong. My teacher admonished me, telling me that expression was a take-off from another four letter word. She was right. Our problem is that when we know this or that word to be evil, we substitute and make up similar sounding expressions, and then use them, thinking we are not doing evil. One example is "Jiminy Christmas", and there are countless others. But it is still the same old wicked heart from which this taking of God's name comes forth.

Taking God's name also includes cursing. Our catechism asks, What is cursing by God's name? Cursing by God's name is A. Blaspheming God by speaking evil of Him or mocking Him, and B. Calling down the anger and punishment of God upon any person or thing. Even if we've never damned anyone with our words, we certainly have desired God punish this or that person in our heart for the evil they did to us. The apostle James writes, "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing, My brethren, these thing ought not so to be." Evil and hateful words are

much like a sewer which flows out of our mouth. Yet then we use our same to praise God our Savior and speak His sweet Gospel Word to others. Is it right if both evil and good flow from our mouth? Shouldn't it always be one, and not the other?

Perhaps one last way we take God's name in vain is by our every sinful action and deed. For when people know that we are Christians, all that we do and say represents or misrepresents Christ. If we wear a cross around our neck, and then speak hateful words to others, we abuse the name of our holy Christ. If we as Christians in the workplace sin against our co-workers in any way, we abuse the name of our holy Christ. If we as Christians, speak God's Word to others, and add to God's Word or take away from God's Word in any way, we abuse the name of our holy Christ. If we judge others falsely, or even if we judge rightly but it is not our place to judge, we abuse the name of our holy Christ. And so really when we being Christians, representing Christ to the world, break any other commandment besides the second, we are taking God's name in vain.

And so brethren, what do we do? For we have all daily taken God's name in vain by our actions, words, and deeds. What do we do? We turn in repentance and faith to the holy name of Jesus! "For He shall save His people from their sins." Remember that He was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. Jesus did, what we have not done. He fulfilled the law in our stead, in our place. Jesus never cursed nor swore in vain. He never took God's name in vain, but kept it holy and sacred and pure. For His name, the name Jesus is holiness in itself. When we then feel the condemnation of the law, and we see in this mirror the uncleanness of our own lips, all we need to do is look to the clean and holy name of Jesus, which means salvation, Savior, for "He shall save His people from their sins." The entire Gospel message of the whole Bible is found in the name, JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins. And if you could summarize, and describe the whole Bible in one plain and simple word, it would be the precious Word, the precious name JESUS, for He HAS saved His people from their sins. His mouth was holy and undefiled for your sake, and His heart was clean also. Since He fulfilled the law for our

sake, all the sins we have committed with our lips and heart have been forgiven. We know this is true, because the very name Jesus means salvation, Savior, deliverance, and liberty. In His holy name alone, you will find all the forgiveness you need, more than enough to cleanse you from all sin. For you are the one He died for. He fulfilled the law for your sake, for your salvation. Faith alone in Him justifies you in God's sight. Believe only in His Word, and His name will make you whole. For His Word has told you so. "Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so, little ones to Him belong, they are weak but He is strong." By faith in this holy name Jesus, we become His little ones, we are His little children. Just think about it, God calls those who believe in Him, His sons and daughters, heirs of God, heirs of heaven, heirs of life everlasting. Let the children of this world be obsessed with the heirs of this earth, Paris Hilton, the Kennedy's, Prince William or Prince Henry. Whatever these earthly heirs receive will soon enough crumble and decay into dust. Money and power, fame and fortune all have their end. But we who believe are not heirs of men, but of God! "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Can you imagine the honor and privilege God has granted unto you by faith, that the sinless and holy and righteous Almighty God calls you His son, His daughter, heirs of life everlasting? By way of the name of Jesus, truly we are sons of God, daughters of God, children of our heavenly Father, little lambs, the sheep of His pasture! Aren't we rich above all measure? Is there anything we lack if only His name is upon us? Indeed God Himself wrote His name upon our heart, when He baptized and washed us clean of all sin. Through our baptism He granted us the names, Holy, Righteous, Chosen, Pure. Let us therefore treasure this precious name of Jesus, and keep it holy, for it is holiness in itself, and it is the very name which makes us holy! May the Lord bless you and keep you in this glad new year. Indeed it will be another year in God's grace, the holy name of Jesus being upon you. Amen.