

# Instruction In The Westminster Standards

## The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations.

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### STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 53. Which is the third commandment?

A. 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. (Ex. 20:7).

Q. 54. What is required in the third commandment?

A. The third commandment requireth the holy and reverent use of God's names, title, attributes, ordinances, word, and works.

**SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:** Ps. 29:2. Matt. 6:9. Rev. 15:34. Mal. 1:14.  
Ps. 138:2. Ps. 107:21, 22.

#### Questions:

1. What do we mean by the "name of the Lord thy God"?  
We mean by the name of "the Lord thy God" any way in which God makes himself known.
2. How is it that God makes himself known?  
He makes himself known: by his names, such as God, Lord, I am, Jehovah; by his titles such as Lord of Hosts, Holy One of Israel, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and others; by his attributes which are his perfections and properties (see Question 4); by his ordinances which are the reading, preaching and hearing of the Word, prayer, thanksgiving, praise, the administration of the sacraments; by his word, the scriptures of the Old and New Testament; by his works, which are the works of creation and providence.
3. What is our responsibility toward these general ways by which He makes himself known?  
Our responsibility is to show a reverent attitude toward all of them in our words, our thoughts and our actions. We should meditate on His names and titles. We should make holy use of God's ordinances seeking God in them. We should be obedient at all times to His Word and recognize His works of creation and providence, blessing Him and praising Him for His mercies and submitting to Him in all things.
4. Does this question pertain at all to legal oaths and vows to God?  
Since the name of God is used in oaths and vows, there is a connection. The reader is urged to consider prayerfully the section of the Confession of Faith entitled: "Of Lawful Oaths and Vows."

## THE GOD OF ABRAHAM

One of the titles ascribed to God as the God of grace is "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Ex. 3:6). Even as He is the God of grace, even as we experience it day after day, we should praise Him for His wonderful works to the children of men. We should never let a day go by without lifting up voices in praise to that Blessed Name! The hymn writer said:

"The God of Abraham praise!  
Who reigns enthroned above,  
Ancient of everlasting days,  
And God of Love!  
Jehovah, great I AM!  
By earth and Heaven confest!  
I bow, and bless the sacred  
name,  
For ever blest!

The God of Abraham praise!  
At whose supreme command  
From earth I rise, and seek the  
joys  
At His right hand:  
I all on earth forsake,  
Its wisdom, fame, and power,  
And Him my only portion make,  
My Shield and Tower.

The God of Abraham praise!  
Whose all-sufficient grade  
Shall guide me all my happy  
days  
In all my ways:  
He called a worm His friend!  
He calls Himself my God!  
And He shall save me to the end  
Through Jesus' blood!  
The whole triumphant host  
Give thanks to God on high:  
Hail! Father, Son, and Holy  
Ghost!  
They ever cry:  
Hail! Abraham's God and mine!  
I join the heavenly lays;  
All might and majesty are  
Thine,  
And endless praise!"

Abraham bowed in heart and mind before the Lord even after his faith had been sorely tried by the long delay in the fulfilment of the promise. Abraham rested upon the divine pledge, and the sufficiency of the divine power and grace of his Lord. We should do the same—recognize who He is and then remember to give praise to His holy name.

However, this commandment has a reverse side to it. As Calvin puts it so well, "The purpose of this commandment is: God wills that we hallow the majesty of his name. Therefore, it means in brief that we are not to profane his name by treating it contemptuously and irreverently." (Institutes, II, viii, 22). We should always remember that by not standing in awe of Him, by not blessing His name, we can break this commandment.

A good discipline for us would be to promise God that we shall read Psalm 139 at least once each week in order that we might keep ourselves in the right perspective and have the reverent attitude we should have toward the God of Abraham.

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