

[The last installment of 'Be a Berean' looked at how the name of God, YHWH, came to be written as LORD in our Bibles. In this installment, the implications of God's name in the process of salvation will be explored.]

"The Name of God IS the love that's in the law."

A. In your Bible, and in mine, the first commandment begins with
I am the LORD your God...

But this is the first commandment in its literal, more power-packed form:
I am YHWH your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me.

What a pity that the name of God is buried in that pivotal Bible verse, because the first commandment has a lot more to do with salvation than it has to do with restriction! If you'll permit a paraphrase, here's the first commandment:

"I AM, and there has never, and will never, be a day when I AM not. If you're lost you can call out for me; if you're falling, reach out for my hand and I'll save you, like I did before, way back there in Egypt. But it's a matter of life and death that you understand this: If you call on any other name, you won't be heard. If you reach for any other hand, it won't be there."

Q. What do you mean when you say God's name is buried in the first commandment? It plainly says, 'I am the LORD.'

A. 'LORD' is not the personal name God gave to Moses when He appeared on Mt. Sinai in a burning bush. I remember the Beatle, George Harrison, singing about "My Sweet Lord." I can assure you that Harrison was not singing about the God of the Holy Bible! 'Lord' is a generic word that takes the power, the Person, the heart--the striking individual Who is God--out of the first commandment, thereby rendering it nearly meaningless.

Q. Meaningless?

A. The commandment's entire intention is to tell us that only the God revealed in scripture--at the burning bush, at the cross--can deliver us from bondage to sin, from oppression at the hand of our enemy. Unless we mentally associate the name of God--YHWH--every time we read LORD, then we are using a name that many false religions use to describe their false gods. Yahweh, the God of the Ten Commandments, the God on the cross, is commanding us to follow only Him, and we out of our tradition bury his singular name with a generic word applied to any number of idols.

Q. What does God think of all this?

A. I can't answer for Him, but let's try an experiment. Go home and call your wife, "Wife." Tell me what she thinks of that. I'll ask you tomorrow.

[The very next day...]

A. So, what did 'Wife' think of her new name?

Q. She didn't 'think'! She just exploded--told me to never call her that again. When I told her the experiment we were conducting, she settled down and was very insightful. She said that 'wife' sounds like a position, not a person. It sounds like "shortstop," she said. She said she is glad that she is my wife, and she's also glad that "Wife" is not my wife!

A. Does that answer your question about how God might feel--about being called by a generic-sounding name instead of by His very own unique name?

Q. Yeah. He wants us to know Him as a person, and not as a position.

A. Bingo! Do you know that the name of the major Old Testament idol--Baal--actually means 'lord'. God doesn't want his name confused with that! In the New Testament, the Pharisees attribute Jesus' healing and saving power to Beel-zubul, the Baal (lord) of the flies. Jesus then tells the Pharisees that if you give credit to a false god for the ability to heal and to save, then you

have repudiated the Holy Spirit--the only source of regenerative power--and thus you have renounced the only means of salvation.

Q. Yeah, I remember Jesus saying that you can say anything you want about Him, but don't blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Is there any other verse in the Bible which refers to this matter?

A. Verse? How about the entire Old and New Testaments! What are the two major things God condemns in the Bible?

Q. Pride and...and...

A. Think about the first commandment...

Q. *I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.*

A. I'm impressed!

Q. I had a good Sunday school teacher when I was a kid.

A. So what does the first commandment condemn?

Q. Idolatry.

A. Right. Did your awesome Sunday school teacher have you memorize the second commandment, too?

Q. *You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them.*

A. I'm so impressed that I'm jealous!

Q. Yeah, I should write her a letter one of these days...

A. So, both the first and second commandments warn us about...

Q. Idolatry, about looking to other so-called gods to save us.

A. See? The first and second commandments are all about looking to a Savior who can actually save. There's a lot of love in God's law when it is rightly understood.

Q. What's this got to do with Jesus, with the New Testament, with today?

A. Everything! Jesus said that there's the broad way, which leads to death, and the narrow way, which leads to life. Jesus said He's the way, and that no one gets to the Father but by Him. In the book of Acts we learn that *salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*

Q. That bothers many people. They think that's narrow-minded and exclusive.

A. The part about it being narrow is our fault, not God's. Sin closed the road. And God's big heart broke when he re-opened the road. It cost Him everything.

Q. I never thought of it like that.

A. He opened it wide enough to save every man, woman, and child--whoever will choose to take it. *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me* is, in a sense, the 'first commandment' of the New Testament.

Q. There really is a lot of love in the law.

A. And Jesus came *not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it!*

(Scripture references: Exodus 20:2-4; Matthew 5:17; 7:13-14; 12:32; John 14:6; Acts 4:12.)

It is our fervent hope that you will 'be a Berean' by attending one or more of these Bible-based classes this week! —

“Acts 29” Bible Class—Sunday at 9:45

“Everyday Wisdom for the Average Joe” (men)—Sunday at 9:45

"A Gentle & Quiet Spirit" (women)--Sunday at 9:45

"Speak God's Word"--Sunday at 9:45

“Lifted Up” Continuous Bible Class—Thursday at 6:00 p.m.