

The Third Word: The Name of the LORD

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[0 : 00] Let's pray this morning. Lord, we ask that as we open your word this morning, as we look just at this one verse, small and yet it's huge, about how we are to lift up, how we are to handle, how we are to live by your name.

Lord, we pray that you would help us to grab a hold of this, to understand this, correct us where we have messed up, forgive us for where we have sinned, encourage us through your command because you love us.

And we pray all these things in your name. Amen. You can be seated. What names of God should we not say in our conversations?

God, Jesus Christ. How about OMG? Jeez, golly. How about using God's name when we see something really awesome or really shocking?

How about if we don't use it at all? There are obvious names for God that we as Christians should not take lightly. And we should avoid saying many of them in a lot of the context in which we currently do.

[1 : 27] But my goal this morning is not to spend the next 30 minutes going over all the names that we should and should not say. This command is much more than that. If all we see in this commandment, or any of the commandments, is just a list of do's and don'ts, then we're going to miss out on a whole lot.

Through the commandments and the laws, God was revealing his character and purpose to the Israelites.

He set his love on them and he set them apart. And for that reason, they were called to respond to his commandments with obedience. With the goal being that they would be a reflection of God to the nations.

How about us? How about Christians after the New Testament, after Jesus lived and died and rose again? What about the Ten Commandments and the laws for us? Do they apply?

Yes, they do. But in a different way. They're still God's words. They're still his commandments and they still reveal his character and will. But we see them through Jesus Christ.

[2 : 41] The Ten Commandments and the refining of those through Jesus' teachings aren't just good rules for good citizens.

If we are sons and daughters of God, if we are in his family, then we have been given through Jesus Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, a new heart and power to obey these commandments. Okay, that's just our intro. In case you were out for a couple weeks just to bring you up to speed. Let's dig in. The third commandment, we're going to start with the command part of the commandment.

That's the first half of verse seven. If you look at it, it says, you shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain. This morning, in order to help us get a fuller understanding of what God is saying to his people and to us, we're going to break that phrase down, that first half of the verse down.

You shall not take. Now when we hear that, you shall not take, and it's combined with name of the Lord, we often and rightfully think about the things that we shouldn't say.

[3 : 59] Right? It's about God's name. We hear that command, do not take, and in our mind, we think, don't say. And that is true, but there is more to this command than just our words.

And we don't want to limit what God is trying to warn us about for our good. To take means to carry or to use. Think of the phrase, take up your cross and follow me.

It involves a mental acceptance of our call. It involves a heart understanding. And it also involves physical action.

All those are in the words. Another example is, I wish he or she would take those words to heart. This means to acknowledge or to be affected by something.

So it's thinking, right thinking about something, and then it's tied to an action, how we would apply that. The point is that this commandment includes more than just the words that we say.

[5 : 07] Our thoughts, our heart attitude, our actions, they all come into this. And we'll talk about that more in just a few minutes.

You shall not take, that's the action, and next we have the object of that action. the object of this commandment, and that is the name of the Lord, your God.

Now, names have meanings. It seems in our culture, at least here in America, that the meaning isn't quite as important.

It's good, but it's more about what the name sounds like. It's more about finding a name that's a little different and unique. We don't want a popular name that's been used for 30 years. We want something a little different.

Maybe change the spelling of it a little bit, right? That's pretty common. How we feel about a name is related more with thoughts and experiences than about the person.

[6 : 12] More about what we think about when we hear that name. So, to a larger degree, the practical meaning of someone's name comes through a variety of things, right?

It comes through what they've done or how we've been treated or some experiences that affect that meaning to us.

So, in a way, we're creating a meaning for a name. It's not actually the meaning, but there's something in our thoughts that's being created for that person and their name.

So, to demonstrate this, think about the likelihood of someone wanting to use one of these famous names that have nice meanings.

How about for a boy, a name that means noble? That sounds pretty good, but would you use Adolf? How about for a girl, you want a name that means delicate?

[7 : 17] That sounds good, but you wouldn't use Delilah. Or the praised one. That would be good, only no one wants to call their child Judas.

None of those names would probably be on any of our top tens, and yet their meanings are good, but what they represent is not good because of what has happened, because of different experiences and how someone has lived their life.

in ancient times, however, they were often picked because of their meaning, and we see this throughout the Bible as well. They were picked because they were associated with a purpose, or maybe a specific physical characteristic.

Think of Esau. Esau and Jacob. Esau was born hairy, and so his name Esau means hairy. quite fitting.

His twin brother was named because it means tricker, or one who overachieves because Jacob was holding on to his twin brother's ankle when he was born, trying to get a one up on his brother.

[8 : 31] So his name is fitting. Moses means taking or drawing out from the water, because he was. And then we have some names that were given for a specific purpose. These were ones that God actually gave, one from Abram to Abraham, which means exalted father.

Sarah, Sarah to Sarah, which means a woman of high rank, princess. Isaac was giving the name because of his parents' old age, and his name means we'll laugh.

when they found out, they will laugh. And then of course, we have multiple references to the greatest name, and that is of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 1.21 says, you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. Names carried with them certain characteristics, and they had a purpose.

In our context, here in Exodus 20, when God says, the name of the Lord, your God, he is pulling together not only a name.

[9 : 48] He is pulling together his character. He is pulling together past promises and power.

Everything that has to do with him, the I am that I am, was being brought together in this name.

Remember what has taken place up to this point, right? You have his appearance in the burning bush. You have his control over nature in the plagues. You have the deliverance of the Israelites. You have the desecration, the destroying of the Egyptian army. You have food and water supplied to the Israelites when there was no food and water.

And he brings them to Mount Sinai, where they get to see just a glimpse, but a powerful glimpse of God's presence as the mountain shakes. And he reminds them that I am the Lord, capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D, Yahweh, your God.

We have just a couple verses that we're going to look at as we're thinking about the name of the Lord. Psalm 8, verse 1. When David says, O Lord, all capital letters again, our Lord, what he's saying is one God, the true God, the God of Israel, that is our God.

[11:11] Revelation 1.8, I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. Psalm 83.18, that they may know that you alone, whose name is the Lord, are the most high over all the earth.

God is telling them, I am the Lord. I am Yahweh, who made a covenant with your father, Abraham, and that is my name. Continuing that command, you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

That describes how the name of the Lord should not be taken in vain. In vain means empty or pointless, meaningless, to have little or no effect.

The Hebrew word is translated misuse. And I think the amplified version does a good job of getting very strongly to the point, in vain, that is irreverently, in false affirmations, or in ways that call into question the character of God.

This is a serious offense. Let's look at the very first occurrence of this sin. Genesis chapter 3. You don't have to turn back there.

[12:34] I'll just summarize it for you. Adam and Eve are in the garden. God tells them they can eat of any tree that they find, except one. One tree in the middle.

Don't eat that one. You will die. Cool. One tree. Don't touch. Everything else good. We got it. But we all know what happens next, don't we? The serpent, the great deceiver, shows up and approaches Eve.

He says, you shall not surely die. Satan takes God's word and his character and he twists it. It is in that moment that he takes the Lord God's name in vain and he doesn't even have to say God's name.

He takes God's name and his truth and his power as creator of the universe that he just recently created and Satan lowers it.

He empties it of its full perfection and authority and he calls God's character into question. Taking the truth of what God says and surrounding it with a lie and with doubt.

[13:59] Proverbs 12, 22 says, lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight. We can see another example of taking God's name in vain.

If we look at Matthew chapter 15 in verses 8 and 9, it says, these people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me.

Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. He's saying, you take things that you want to talk about and you make them godly. You act as if you are holy and godly and you are not.

You build up your own beliefs and your own teachings, but you don't know me. You don't love me. We say that we love God, but do we?

Will we do whatever he calls us to do because our love for him is greater than anything else? Do we love like he loves?

[15:12] And do we hate what he hates? We praise him on Sunday, but to the world, what do we worship Monday through Saturday?

We don't want to listen or empty the name of the Lord through our words or through our actions. We are to revere and to fear him.

We are to love and to serve him. We are to lift up and fill up the name of the Lord, to praise his name, not to empty it of anything. Jesus points out the importance of this command when he's teaching his disciples how to pray.

In Matthew 6, verse 9, he says, Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Jesus is showing us how we should regard the holiness, the powerfulness, the gloriousness, the overallness of God's name.

We should be praying for God's name to be hallowed. Now we need to understand that that doesn't happen in the world unless it first happens in each one of us personally.

[16:35] We aren't praying for something to happen out there. The world would be hallowed if it's not hallowed here first. So we're praying for the hallowedness, the holiness, the separation, the

specialness, the protection of God's name in us first.

That's what we're praying for. And we are praying that God through the work of the Holy Spirit would change our hearts.

Our hearts are not holy by nature. They're sinful. And so as Christians we pray that through the Holy Spirit that our hearts would be changed.

Changed so that God would look greater than the world. Romans 10 13 For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

He chooses us. His spirit opens opens our hearts. We don't do that.

[17 : 49] We can't save ourselves. I was thinking about the song when we get to heaven and our eyes are transfixed on Jesus' face.

It only does that because he loved us enough to change our hearts. His spirit opens our hearts. His spirit gives us the spiritual ability to call on his name. Acts 4 12 There is salvation in no one else.

No one else. No other God. No other works that you're going to do will you find salvation. That's a name I don't want to lessen.

That's a name that God doesn't want us to lessen. And that brings us to the consequence.

[18 : 53] The second part of verse 7. For the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. The Christian standard Bible says the Lord will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses his name.

He holds us guilty for taking his name in vain, for using his name flippantly, void of any of the power and the awesomeness and the salvation and the love that should come from his name.

In commandment number two, we learned how God is a jealous God and how we treat him and talk about him makes a difference.

As a Christian, as a child of God, we want to live a life that reflects his character. Not our life or what we think he should be.

And that can't happen if we dishonor him with how we talk about him, about how we use his name or how we misrepresent who he is. When we do that, we're disobeying God's command and we stand guilty and punishable before him.

[20 : 16] Now we aren't talking eternal punishment like going to hell. This verse is not saying that your salvation, if you're a child of God, God's name in vain.

But it does say that we are held accountable for how we speak and how we treat God's name. What does it mean that the Lord holds us guilty?

It means that he will not let the sin go unpunished. Now remember, these commandments are not directed towards the world. These commandments are directed towards God's people.

Those who don't love God, who don't believe God, they don't care how they use God's name. Their hearts are closed. They don't love him. They don't want to live for him.

The punishment for their sins is still laying on them. Their punishment is eternity from God.

[21 : 27] Eternity in hell. If that's you this morning, I want to invite you to come and seek me out.

Seek Sean out. Seek someone else out here that we can talk and pray with you. I want you to know this salvation. I don't want all of your sins, the penalty for that to continue to lay on you because there will be a time where that penalty is going to come due.

But if you're one of his own children and you're misusing his name, if you're devaluing his character, then he will discipline you.

He does discipline and punish his own. Notice that of all the commandments, this is the only one that specifically assigns a consequence to the offender.

In the second commandment, we saw punishment that was directed towards future generations.

Yes, but this one points to the one breaking the commandment. If you struggle with that idea of God punishing you, or maybe you're thinking that that was the Old Testament.

[22 : 48] God doesn't work like that now. It's all about grace. I want to share with you two verses in the New Testament that will help make that more, make that help that make sense to you.

The first one is 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 30. That is why many of you, this is when he's talking about taking communion and taking it in an unworthy fashion.

He says this is why many of you are weak and ill and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly we would not be judged.

But when we are judged by the Lord we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. There is punishment for those who live against God's commands and it's for the purpose of keeping them from condemnation.

Hebrews chapter 12 verses 10 and 11 For they disciplined this is speaking of earthly fathers for they disciplined us their children for a short time as it seemed best for them but he disciplines God disciplines us for our good that we may share his holiness for the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it God knows we are sinners but he desires us to be holy and so he patiently teaches us he walks through life with us correcting us when we go off the path helping to grow us in our godliness and our Christ likeness and yes that does mean disciplining us when we don't obey or when we need correction now we aren't given an exact punishment for misusing

[24 : 52] God's name it wouldn't be helpful if we had a chart and on this side all the words of God's name that you put on this side are all your punishments having that would only drive us towards a life of legalism God desires his people to live holy as he is holy and that happens when we set our hearts and our minds on him not follow a list as we read and learn about him and his word as we talk to him through prayer as we live for him trying to do what he desires of us his name is honored and praised and in that we are protecting ourselves from misusing his name the point that I want to end with is the last one and that is the cause for this commandment now we've already talked about some of the reasons for this commandment but

I want to make sure that we leave with the right idea about God as if we leave here today and our thoughts about God is that he is cold and distant some overlord who can't handle someone else talking bad about him and he's just looking to squash anybody who doesn't follow his commands that couldn't be more further from the truth and it's that thinking that will harm and limit our relationship to God if that's how we view him and it will also affect how we share the good news of salvation with others now understand that God is God so if God gives us a commandment and doesn't want to give us a reason we just obey it because he's God but he doesn't do that I think of a child as they come to you and they have a question or they want to do something and you say no maybe it's out of irritation that you don't want to be bothered with it but then they follow up with why not and sometimes in the moment our reason is just because that's a horrible reason to a child you can't debate that there's no substance there and so the awesomeness about

God is he doesn't leave us with just an empty because I said so his commands are because he loves us the purpose of this commandment was not to protect the Lord it was for the protection of his people it is for our protection if his name is emptied of importance if it is disrespected if his gift of love and protection to the Israelites and to us our salvation if it is not valued if his power is belittled if his presence among us is just pushed aside then what does that say about his very nature of I am who I am his character is missed by his people his character is misrepresented to all of humanity and that's why he gives us this commandment why does

God want us to treat his name special as a name that is above all names because it is why treat his name as if it has power if it changes lives if it heals if it comforts if it loves if it is true truth and honesty because it does let us not lessen the name of the Lord who has saved us let us lift him up daily as the one who has lifted us up daily let us pray God we thank you for your commandments they sometimes seem like they can be hard and cold God we pray that you would help open our hearts and our minds to the love that you have put into these commandments for us for our good Lord help our lives to be affected by this may we live in a way that lifts up your name because it saves because it is above all names because you are power because you are love because you comfort us that is the salvation and the hope that we need that is the salvation and hope we need to give to the world God we pray that you would just make that solidify that in our hearts and our minds today Lord may we serve you with your name lifted up this week Lord we pray in your name Amen