


Third Commandment: Do Not Take the Lord's Name in Vain


Exodus 20:7

Presented by Bob DeWaay
January 4, 2009



Overview


- We are not to take Yahweh's name in vain
- Yahweh's name speaks of his person, nature and mighty deeds
- "take" means to lift up, raise, or carry (it does not mean "utter")
- "vain" means "empty, unsubstantial, worthless"
- There are implications about speech; but they do not exhaust the meaning
- God's people always bear His name and they are either glorifying it or bearing it "in vain."



The Third Commandment


- **Exodus 20:7**

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.


 **The Significance of the Name**

- **Exodus 3:14, 15**

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations."

 **The Significance of the Name**

- Linked to God's Attributes (Exo. 34:6-8)
- To God's Deliverance (Exo. 20:2)
- To God's Provision (Exo. 16:33)
- To God's Presence (Exo. 6:7)
- To God's Covenant (Exo. 19:5, 6)
- To God's Special Miracles (Exo. 34:10)

 To "take" means "to lift up; raise; carry"

- **Exodus 20:7**

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

“Vain” means “emptiness; vanity; unsubstantial; worthless”

■ **Exodus 20:7**

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

What it means to “carry” the name “Yahweh” in an empty, vain way

“In general terms, this commandment prohibits a lack of seriousness about Yahweh’s Presence in Israel, demonstrated through a pointless, misleading, or even false use of his name.” . . . “To treat Yahweh’s name with disrespect is to treat his gift lightly, to underestimate his power, to scorn his Presence, and to misrepresent to the family of humankind his very nature as ‘The One Who Always Is.’” (John Durham: *Exodus*)

Prohibited speech

- Using the Name to swear falsely
- Using the name frivolously
- Speaking falsely in God’s name
- Speaking defiant or complaining words
- Using God’s name to conjure or as an incantation (like the pagans)

“Vain” use of God’s name

■ **Ezekiel 13:6, 7**

“They see falsehood [lit. vanity] and lying divination who are saying, ‘The LORD declares,’ when the LORD has not sent them; yet they hope for the fulfillment of their word. Did you not see a false vision and speak a lying divination when you said, ‘The LORD declares,’ but it is not I who have spoken?”

“Vain” use of God’s name


■ **Ezekiel 22:28**

And her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false [vain] visions and divining lies for them, saying, “Thus says the LORD God,” when the LORD has not spoken.


“Vain” use of God’s name

■ **Malachi 3:13, 14**


“Your words have been arrogant against Me,” says the LORD. “Yet you say, ‘What have we spoken against You?’ “You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the LORD of hosts?’”


 The opposite of taking God's name in vain is to hold it in reverence

- **Psalm 2:11**
 Worship the LORD with reverence, And rejoice with trembling.
- **Psalm 95:1**
 O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation.



 The opposite of taking God's name in vain is to keep covenant

- **Deuteronomy 28:9, 10**
 "The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will be afraid of you."



 The opposite of taking God's name in vain is to understand its "heaviness"

- **1Chronicles 16:24, 28**
 Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples. . .
 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
 Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

Heb. *kabod* "glory" means "heavy, weighty"
 Heb. *shav* "vain" means "empty, unsubstantial"


 Applications and Implications

- 1) To avoid taking God's name in vain we must live in a manner that honors God
- 2) We should worship God in a way that shows that His name rests heavily upon us
- 3) God will work graciously in His covenant people so that they will not bear His name in vain

 1) To avoid taking God's name in vain we must live in a manner that honors God

■ **2Timothy 2:19**

Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness."

 1) To avoid taking God's name in vain we must live in a manner that honors God

■ **1Peter 2:12**

Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

2) We should worship God in a way that shows that His name rests heavily upon us

■ **Isaiah 29:13, 14b**

Then the Lord said, “Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote, . . . the wisdom of their wise men will perish, And the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed.”

2) We should worship God in a way that shows that His name rests heavily upon us

■ **John 4:23, 24**

But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

2) We should worship God in a way that shows that His name rests heavily upon us

■ **Malachi 1:6**

“A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor [*kabod*]? And if I am a master, where is My respect?” says the Lord of hosts to you, “O priests who despise My name.” But you say, “How have we despised Your name?”

2) We should worship God in a way that shows that His name rests heavily upon us

■ **Malachi 2:2, 7**

“If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name,” says the LORD of hosts, “then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them already, because you are not taking it to heart.” . . . “For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.”

3) God will work graciously in His covenant people so that they will not bear His name in vain

■ **Ezekiel 36:20, 21**

When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, “These are the people of the LORD; yet they have come out of His land.” But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went.

3) God will work graciously in His covenant people so that they will not bear His name in vain

■ **Ezekiel 36:23**

“I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD” declares the Lord God [adonai Yahweh] “when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.”

3) God will work graciously in His covenant people so that they will not bear His name in vain

■ **Ezekiel 36:24, 25**

“For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.”

3) God will work graciously in His covenant people so that they will not bear His name in vain

■ **Ezekiel 36:26, 27**

Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

3) God will work graciously in His covenant people so that they will not bear His name in vain

■ **Philippians 1:6**

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

