



The Ten Commandments

Part 5 – Holy is His Name

Exodus 20:7

The theme of the book of Exodus is that God saves his people from their captivity so that they may worship him. This was God's announced purpose in freeing his people after hundreds of years as slaves in Egypt. God told Moses that he was sending him to command Pharaoh to release the Hebrew captives. After giving him his mission, God told Moses his name: "I AM WHO I AM" (Ex. 3:14).

God's revelation of his covenant name to Moses is significant not least of all because it was an act of divine disclosure. That is, it was a way for God to reveal himself to Moses. God's chosen name reveals

essential truth about his eternal nature and self-sufficiency and radical non-dependency. But this act of revelation was also a way that God embraced Moses. For God to reveal his name to Moses and invite him to invoke the name was an act of covenant loyalty. It was grace. God was saying to Moses, "You may use my name." This is both a privilege and a sober responsibility.

The Third Commandment places restrictions on how God's name may be used. We are not to use the Lord's name in vain. More literally it reads, "You shall not lift up the name of the Lord your God for nothingness." God is holy and we are to treat his name as holy. We are not to profane, or treat as common, the name of the Lord.

Main Idea: We must treat God's name with honor and never misuse it lest we profane God.

1. Why the Third Commandment?

a) There is correspondence between the Lord and his name.

- We all treat our names as more than mere labels. Indeed, to a certain extent our names are an extension of ourselves. For instance none of us want our name attached to some product or cause that violates our conscience. On the other hand, we are happy to attach our name to something in which we believe. In a similar way, God cares about how his name is used. In God's case there is a profound correspondence between his name and his character. Scripture invites us to see and value this correspondence. We are called to praise, honor, bless, and glorify God's name. In honoring God's name we are honoring God.

b) The Lord's name is a gift to his people.

- When we refer to God's name certainly we are referring to the covenant name given to Moses in Exodus 3: *YHWH* (translated as **Lord** in most English translations). God revealed this name to Moses (and therefore to the succeeding generations of God's people) as an act of covenant loyalty. That we know and are invited to use the Lord's name appropriately is a gift of relational intimacy to his people.
- The word "God" is technically a general term. However in a practical sense we use it to specify the One to whom we direct our praise and prayer; the one we proclaim as Lord. The clause "my God" is used scores of times in the Bible. Jesus referred to the Father as "God" and cried out from the cross, "My God, my God!" So we are not to use the word "God" any

way we like under the guise that it is not “technically” the name of the Lord. The prophets, Jesus, and the apostles used the word “God” to name the Lord.

2. Do not misuse the Lord’s name.

- The Third Commandment places restrictions on how God’s name may be used. We are not to use the Lord’s name in vain. More literally it reads, “You shall not lift up the name of the Lord your God for nothingness.” God is holy and we are to treat his name as holy. We are not to profane, or treat as common, the name of the Lord.
- Common ways that the Lord’s name is misused:
 - a) Using the Lord’s name frivolously or vulgarly.
 - b) Using the Lord’s name to advance what is false
 - c) Using the Lord’s name to justify wickedness
 - d) Using the Lord’s name to advance a personal agenda.
 - e) Careless prayer and worship.
 - f) Bringing harm to the reputation of Jesus Christ.

3. Honor the Lord’s name.

- Each of the Commandments involve a vice to reject and a virtue to practice.
- In Deuteronomy 28:58 Moses calls God’s name, “this glorious and awesome name – I AM your God.” We are to treat God’s name (and all other references to God) with awe and reverence. God did not give us his name to use for manipulation, to advance personal agendas or to supply our vocabulary with more vulgarity. God gave us his name for the purpose of worship and prayer. He gave us his name that we might be comforted by his covenant loyalty.

4. There is judgment for those who misuse the Lord’s name.

Vs. 7b – “The Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.”

- Disobedience to God’s law is serious. To disobey God’s law is to dishonor God. It is to treat him as a non-entity. When we deliberately disobey God’s law we act as though God is powerless to act or that he does not care about his holiness.
- God is just and he will punish sinners. To do less would be to disregard his own righteousness. And so for all those who have ever taken the Lord’s name in vain there is a promise of judgement. For all those who have ever used God’s name frivolously, as a vulgarity, as a means to hide the truth, to advance a personal agenda there is the terrifying promise of judgment. For all those who have sinned and thus attached the name of Jesus to what is unrighteous and unholy there is the promise of God’s judgment. He will not hold you guiltless.
- And he has not. Indeed, God has poured out his wrath upon your sin. He has not withheld a single flame of judgment from your sin. This is exactly what he did when he hung his Son upon the cross. He poured out his just wrath upon your guilt. Jesus died for your sin. He took the punishment of your violence toward the Third Commandment. And by his stripes you are healed.