

# All Is Not Vanity, After All

## Introduction

*“<sup>7</sup> You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.” (Exodus 20:7)*

Do not treat the name of God as useless, inconsequential, worthless or false.

## What is God’s name?

*“<sup>13</sup> Then Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you,” and they ask me, “What is his name?” what shall I say to them?’  
<sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel: “I AM has sent me to you.”’  
<sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses, ‘Say this to the people of Israel: “The LORD [YHWY], 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 thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.’ (Exodus 3:13–15) (ESV)*

God says that His name is “I Am Who I Am.” Then He added that Moses should refer Him as the “LORD,” the God of their fathers. That term LORD, usually capitalized in translation, is the Hebrew word YHWH.

**God is given over 1,000 names in the scriptures, but the one that is before and above all is YHWH.**

YHWY is an expression of God’s calling Himself, “I Am.” His name is “I AM” or “YHWH.”

## What does God tell us about Himself by telling us His name?

### 1. He is eternal and self-existent.

Who made God? No one. No one is before God. He is named in the present tense. He self-exists and always exists. No one is before Him. He has no one that caused Him and no one who preceded Him. No one is greater than Him because no one made Him.

He will not cease to be since He Is. He is forever because He is always in the present.

### 2. He is the origin of all things — the first cause.

Since He is before anything else, He is the first cause of all things. He is the Origin of all things. When YHWY talks to Moses, it is the Creator of all, who causes all things, who instructs Moses. There can be no one greater and no one more important than God, the great I Am. All that exists came into being by His choosing.

### 3. He is greater than all things, since they all depend upon Him.

Since He made all things, all things relate to God as dependent. Everything that is, or ever was, owes its existence to God. Therefore, He is greater than all, and all are dependent on Him, while He is independent of all things. He needs nothing for existence, but everything else needs Him for existence.

### 4. He may do as He pleases and all that He does is good.

Since all things come from Him and depend on Him, He is the standard that defines all things. Beauty is defined by Him. Strength is defined by Him. Honor is defined by Him. Truth is defined by Him. Holiness is defined by Him. Reality is defined by Him. He is the standard for all things, therefore all that He does is good, because there is no one outside and above Him who can say that anything He does is evil or inferior.

## How does one go about breaking the third commandment?

How does one take the name of the LORD in vain? How does one take the name of God as useless, inconsequential, worthless or false?

### 1. By not recognizing His Son as YHWY.

The greatest way to make the name of God worthless is to deny the deity of Jesus Himself. The remarkable thing about us Christians is that we agree that Jesus was a man but we do not stop there. We say that He is God. You could say that we say that “He Is!” He is the YHWH of the Bible. He is the LORD.

*“<sup>53</sup> Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?” <sup>54</sup> Jesus answered, ‘If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, “He is our God.” <sup>55</sup> But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. <sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.’ <sup>57</sup> So the Jews said to him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?’ <sup>58</sup> Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’ <sup>59</sup> So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.” (John 8:53–59) (ESV)*

Here is Jesus declaring Himself to be God. He is “I AM.” “Before I came into being, I AM.” The God above all things broke into space and time to become one of us. He who is God became a man.

For someone to say that Jesus is not God is to declare His name to be nothing, useless, empty. Some want to say that Jesus is a good man, but not the God/man. They err greatly.

*“That all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.” (John 5:23)*

Any who say that Jesus is not God does not honor God. In the times past, before Jesus came to earth, God overlooked the ignorance of mankind. But now He calls all people everywhere to acknowledge and honor Jesus as the Lord.

And,

*“<sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*  
(Philippians 2:9–11)

God’s goal in all humanity is the exaltation of His Son as the Lord of all. Any who does not acknowledge God the Son now is in sin and error.

Furthermore, salvation itself depends on whether a person acknowledges Jesus to be the Lord or not. You must confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and trust in your heart that His death and resurrection are not only true, but your hope for eternal life. All of us are sinners. We all need to receive forgiveness of sins. All of us needed the innocent sacrifice of the life of Jesus on the cross. But to be saved we must acknowledge that the man who sacrificed His life for us is also the LORD, YHWH, the maker of all things. If we deny Him this truth, then we use His name in vain.

## **2. By saying God’s name without talking to Him, for Him, or about Him.**

The traditional uses of God’s name or the name of His Son, as a curse, breaks the commandment of God. Don’t do it.

## **3. By including His name in a list of gods.**

To list the LORD as one of many gods is to elevate those gods to His level. This means taking the One who is, of inestimable value and greater than us all, and saying that a created being, a false god, is His equal.

For example, often interfaith gatherings require respect for the gods of all present, even to the point of speaking God’s name in the most generic language possible. People do not call Him YHWH, Jesus, the Lord in such situations. In public prayers at sporting events or in government, Christians will sometimes not mention Jesus in the prayer, leaving the identity of God open to interpretation. This is using the name of the Lord in vain.

As a rule, The Masonic lodge takes this approach, calling God the “great architect of the universe,” and thereby allowing their members to leave Jesus out of their definition of God, if they choose. This is using God’s name in vain for it is not identifying God as who He is. Christians should not pray with prayers that leave out the name of Jesus, or skirt the issue by saying, “in your name we pray,” unless the prayer makes clear that Jesus is the God they are referring to. Christians should not join organizations that claim to serve God and not identify

Him as Jesus and none other. Christians should not lead prayers in public places unless they are willing to identify Jesus as God.

And Christians should not join in worship with people of other faiths who deny that Jesus is the Christ, or worship other gods.

Allah is not equal to God. Buddha is not equal to God. Krishna is not equal to God. God as anyone understands him is not equal to God. The Great architect of the universe is not God. Jesus is God. Period. Never insult Jesus or the name of YHWY by including Him as an equal under an umbrella of many gods.

### **3. By doubting His promises, or belittling the truth and power of what He says.**

Many Christians use the Lord's name in vain without realize they are doing it. How? By declaring that He is not powerful to save or to keep His promises. Look at this text:

*“Your words have been hard against me, says the LORD. But you say, ‘How have we spoken against you?’ You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the arrogant blessed. Evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape.’ ” (Malachi 3:13-15)*

These people are saying that it is a waste of time to serve God, because it doesn't work. Life doesn't get better in the ways they want it too. Why should they serve God if wicked people prosper but they don't?

When we are discouraged and someone says, “God is still good and He is on your side,” and we say, “What good is following God if my life is like this?” that is using the name of God in vain, because you are claiming that His name is not powerful, that His promises are not true, and that serving Him is not the best thing to do.

It is better to receive good times and bad times from the LORD and trust that He has your best in mind and that HE is powerful enough to save. Look at the contrast to those who take the name of the Lord in vain:

*“<sup>16</sup> Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. <sup>17</sup> ‘They shall be mine,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. <sup>18</sup> Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.’ ” (Malachi 3:13–18) (ESV)*

God paid attention to the ones who trusted Him instead of using His name in vain.

#### **4. By misrepresenting His Words.**

The final way of breaking the third commandment that we will address today is — perhaps the most challenging — misrepresenting His words. That happens when we change what He says or attach the words, “God said,” or “God told me,” to words that He did not say.

Of course, we should not say, “God’s Word says,” and then teach what the Bible does not say. But the more common way we will be tempted to misrepresent God’s Words is to claim that He says things that He does not, outside of the Bible.

We must be very careful using the words, “God said,” or “God told me,” and then speaking words not in the Bible. When I was a new believer, from the example of those around me, I had the expectation that I was supposed to hear from God personally on a regular basis. Likewise, I got into the habit of telling people that God told me to do things, when what I really meant was, “I decided this was the right thing to do, and so I am assuming that God told me this.”

But I began to notice that a lot of people were hearing things from God that turned out not to be true. More than once a young lady told me that God had told her that a specific person would marry her. It did not happen. More than once I saw people move to a new location, to do some ministry, only to declare, “I must have heard God wrong.”

It is easy to say, “God told me to leave my job and do something else,” when we really mean, “I thought it was a good idea to leave my job, and I can’t see why God would mind.” But those two phrases are not the same, are they?

Be very careful with the name of God. He is like no one else. Do not speak His name unless you are talking to Him, for Him, or about Him. And then, speak only what He speaks and be silent otherwise. Never speak words that make God smaller or equal to anyone or anything in the universe.

**God is the only God, and He is! Jesus is His only Son, and He is Lord.**

**The Holy Spirit glorifies the Father through the Son.**

**Hold God always in a place of honor in your heart and on your lips.**

