



Ten Words to Live By

Oct-Nov 2023

3rd Commandment – Unslandered Name

(sermons: Nov 5)



Introduction

The 3rd Commandment says: You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. (*Exodus 20:7*)

First, we need to understand what it means by ‘the name’ of God, which is why we look at Exodus 3. This is the chapter where God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush before sending him to confront the Pharaoh about treating his people as slaves and then delivering them from Egypt.

Then we think about how the Israelites at the time, and we today, might ‘misuse’ God’s name.

Lastly we consider how we can positively honour God’s name, not only in our speech but in our actions.

Exodus 3: 11-17 God Reveals his Name to Moses

v.11 *Who am I...? - Is Moses being humble, or making excuses?*

v.13 *What is his name? - see the notes in the box on the next page about the Name of God*

v.14 *I AM - see the notes in the box*

1. What did God reveal to Moses about his Name or Character, in this encounter at the Burning Bush? What does the Name of God in *verse 14* mean to us? Is the idea of God being the same through all the generations of his people (as in v.15) important to us?
2. Which names, or titles of God the Father, Jesus, or the Spirit are special to us? Which do we use in our prayers? Has our preference changed over time, or does it depend on the situation we are in?

Exodus 20: 1-7 How might we Misuse God’s Name?

These verses include the first 3 commandments, although we concentrate on the 3rd Commandment in v.7.

3. In what different ways might we ‘misuse the name of the LORD your God’?
4. Some Jews felt that the way to avoid breaking this commandment was never to use the special Name of God (*see box on the meaning of YHWH, represented by ‘LORD’ in the NIV translation*).
Is it important to us to avoid using the word ‘God’ or ‘Jesus’ casually, or even as swear-words?
Does it upset us if people use God’s name like this? How can we respond without being judgemental?
5. One way that Jews emphasized a promise, or reinforced the truth of what they said, was by a phrase such as ‘*I swear in God’s Name that*’ or ‘*As God is my witness...*’
What did Jesus say about such practices? (*see Matthew 5:33-37 in the box*)
Is there a danger in how we use such expressions as: ‘*The Lord told me to...*’?

How can we Honour God’s Name?

6. What can we do to honour God’s Name: to give him the credit that he is due, to ensure that he has the reputation that he deserves, to lead others to respect him?
If we are known as ‘Christians’, how can our lives lead people to want to know more about Christ and to know him for themselves?
How does this apply to the church, as well as to us individually? (*see Acts 4:8-12; 5:40-42 in the box*)
What difference might it make if we remembered that, in the end, God will ensure that his Name and the Name of his Son will be honoured everywhere? (*see Philippians 2:8-11 in the box*)

THE NAME OF GOD (refer to Exodus 3:13-15)

In ancient Hebrew writing there are only consonants. The special name for God in Ex 3:15 is YHWH. This Name would be pronounced YAHWEH; later versions of Hebrew have 'pointing' (like accents) near the consonants to show the vowels.

The Name YHWH is related to the Hebrew verb 'to be'. It is like a shortened form of 'I AM WHO I AM' (see Ex 3:14). Since verb tenses are not always clear in ancient Hebrew, Ex3:14 could read 'I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE' or 'I WILL BE WHO I WAS'. So, the Name YHWH may be emphasizing God's changelessness. Or it may mean that God's Character will be revealed by His actions, as in Ex.20:2: 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt.'

In many English translations this special name for God is translated as The LORD (in capitals).

The Jews had such a respect for this Name of God that they would not say the Name YAHWEH aloud; they would substitute another title for God such as Adonai (My Lord). So, they would sometimes write the consonants YHWH with the vowels for Adonai, to show which word should be substituted for YAHWEH when reading aloud. This could cause some confusion to translators and led to YHWH being translated by the name JEHOVAH in the old Authorised Version of the Bible.

In Old Testament times a person's name was not just a means of identifying someone but was supposed to indicate something about their character. When Moses says in Ex 3:13 that people may ask him 'What is his name?' he is implying that such people may doubt that he has had an encounter with God; so they may ask Moses to give them some new insight into God's Character (or Name) to prove that Moses has really met Him. So Moses asks God to give him some such new insight.

Matthew 5: 33-37

³³ 'Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "Do not break your oath, but fulfil to the Lord the oaths you have made." ³⁴ But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶ And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷ All you need to say is simply "Yes," or "No"; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.'

Acts 4:8-12; 5:40-42

^{4: 8} Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: 'Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹ If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, ¹⁰ then know this, you and all the people of Israel: it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹ Jesus is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone." ¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.'

^{5: 40} His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

⁴¹ The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. ⁴² Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

Philippians 2:8-11

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.