

# The Third Commandment

"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.

Exodus 20:7

Many people think that **taking the LORD's Name in vain** simply means to use God's Name as a profanity, or to make an oath in His Name but not fulfill it. Both are true, but God's prohibition is much broader than that ... and far more serious.

The LORD's Name is not merely a label we use to distinguish Him, but much more. It represents God's Person, His Authority and Glory. To take His Name in 'vain', or as 'nothing', then, is to take God Himself as nothing! And that has grave consequences. Consider the following ways this Commandment is violated by nonbelievers and believers alike.

## Defying God's Authority

Sandwiched in one of David's incredible Psalms extolling the Deity's omnipresence, knowledge and power, is a section that almost seems out of place. It echoes the 'imprecatory psalms' that call God's punishment on evil doers, and introduces David's prayer of self-scrutiny. But it also gives us a glimpse into what it means to take the LORD's Name in vain.

'For they speak against You wickedly,  
And Your enemies take Your name in vain.  
Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD?  
And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?'

Psalm 139:20-21

- Circle how 'they' speak against God.
- Underline what God's enemies take.
- Underline who David loathes.

How does defying God's authority relate to taking His Name in vain? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The Name of God represents His authority. It is what is implicit when we pray in the Name of Jesus. We come to God in prayer, not by our own authority, but by the authority that is inherent in the Person and Name of God's Son.

So when a person takes God's Name in vain, he is proclaiming that God's authority is empty and weak, and need not be heeded. I shudder to think what it will be like on the Day of reckoning when we will be called to account.

Have you taken God's Name in vain by defying His authority? Are you now doing anything that you know God is not pleased with? Then make yourself right with Him now and, like David, ask God to lead you 'in the everlasting way'. Otherwise, you can be sure that God will honor His threat and not leave you 'unpunished'!



## David's Heart

David was called a man after God's own heart' (1 Samuel 13:14; 1 Kings 15:5). Here, his heart is filled with anger toward those who blaspheme God, indicative of the anger of God toward them.

## Fearing God

(Proverbs 9:10)

The reason some so easily defame God's Name is their lack of fear of Him. This lack results in foolish acts and thinking. But I assure you that those who do not fear God now will learn what it means to fear Him at the Judgment, but by then, it will be too late!

## Denying God's Authority

Maybe you would not put yourself in the category of those who 'Defy God's Authority'. After all, you believe in God and even try to help others to faith in Him as well. You believe in His Word and freely share it with those around you. But listen to what Paul said to the religious Jews who believed in God's Word.

- 22 You who say that one should not commit adultery,  
do you commit adultery?  
You who abhor idols,  
do you rob temples?
- 23 You who boast in the Law,  
through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?
- 24 For "THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES  
BECAUSE OF YOU,"

*Romans 2:22-24*

How would you describe the people Paul is addressing in this verse? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How is God's Name blasphemed because of them? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When we claim to know God's Word, but fail to live in accordance to it, we are guilty of denying God's authority, and cause unbelievers to blaspheme or speak evil of God. Perhaps you have personally witnessed this phenomenon and heard the criticism of some who view believers as hypocrites? They are seeing people who, though believers in God, are denying His authority over their lives.

Maybe instead of actively defying God's authority, we are passively denying it's right over us. We love God's Word and share it with others, but do not practice it for our own lives. We are, in effect, taking God's Name in vain and are guilty of causing others to do the same!

## Abusing God's Authority

The Hebrew word translated 'vain' in Exodus 20:7 can also be translated 'false', as in Deuteronomy 5:20.

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

*Deuteronomy 5:20*

How does replacing the word 'vain' with 'falsehood' affect the meaning of this

commandment? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



*Lamentations 2:15-16*  
*Ezekiel 36:20-23*  
*Matthew 18:7*

## Hypocrisy

One of Jesus' favorite words was the word 'hypocrite'. He denounced them! He spoke out against religious hypocrisy for it defamed the Name of God and caused others to do the same.

The Greek word for hypocrite referred to an actor, a performer or a counterfeit. There are many who profess to be Christians, but their lives contradict their words.

However, do not be quick to judge, for only God knows what is truly in a person's heart. He may simply be an immature or a carnal Christian. In either case, it is imperative that he gets right with God lest he finds himself a counterfeit Christian!

**It is possible to serve God** and do so falsely. Near the end of His Sermon, Jesus spoke some of the most troubling words for the ears of His followers.

- 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,'  
will enter the kingdom of heaven,  
but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven  
*will enter.*
- 22 "Many will say to Me on that day,  
'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name,  
and in Your name cast out demons,  
and in Your name perform many miracles?'
- 23 "And then I will declare to them,  
'I never knew you;  
DEPART FROM ME,  
YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

Matthew 7:21-23

- Circle where not everyone who says to Jesus 'Lord, Lord' will enter.
- Underline who will enter there.
- Underline three things that 'many' will say to Jesus 'on that day'.
- Circle what Jesus will 'declare' to them.
- Circle what Jesus says they practice.

What is the significance of the truth in verse 21? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What does the list of activities in verse 22 seem to indicate about the 'many'? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How would you explain Jesus' response in verse 23? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**It is sobering to learn** that even miraculous ministries done in Jesus' Name can be carried out in deceit, and even addressing Jesus as 'Lord' is no guarantee of genuine faith. It is not the manifestation of service in Jesus' Name, but a life of faithful obedience to God that gains God's pleasure. We may fool those around us, but will never deceive the One who looks into our hearts to discern our true motives.

**Unless we take seriously** the danger of 'taking God's Name in vain', we risk hearing Jesus declare to us, 'I never knew you'. God forbid!



**False Prophets**  
Jeremiah 23:13-32

### Prove the Gifts

Some churches become overly enamored with the gifts of the Spirit and the Signs and Wonders that accompany them. Don't get me wrong. I, too, believe in the spiritual gifts, but I also know how enticing they can be to display for our own glory! The apostle Paul taught us to 'not despise prophetic utterances' but he also cautioned us to 'examine everything carefully'. (1 Thessalonians 5:20-21)

Before you exercise your God given gift, make sure it is God who is directing you to use it.

## Aligning with Our Enemy Against God's Authority

As if the above defiant acts were not severe enough, 'taking God's Name in vain' will also align us with our most bitter enemy, the devil! Consider what Scripture says concerning satan's counterfeit messiah, the Antichrist, in the passage below.

- 5 There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.
- 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, *that is*, those who dwell in heaven.

*Revelation 13:5-6*

- Underline what pours out of the Antichrist's mouth.
- Circle what he blasphemes.

The ultimate ravager of this commandment is satan who seethes at even the mention of God's Name. That is why blasphemies will pour forth from the mouth of his incarnate counterfeit. The devil desires nothing more than to defile God's holy Name. And when we break this commandment, we only make him smile, and his job easier!

‘...at the name of  
Jesus  
every knee will bow...’



*Daniel 7:8,11,25,36*