

Tonight we are going to be talking about the importance of a name. When a baby is born, we take the naming of it very seriously. We don't just pull it out a phone book on the way to the hospital. We usually give a great deal of thought to a name because that is something you wear all of your life.

Really, a name it is just a series of syllables you put together and we pronounce them a certain way. We call a furry thing with four little legs a DOG, but if years ago, someone had decided that thing was to be called a GRIVET, then we would have called it a GRIVET. But it would have still been the same thing— a furry creature with four little legs. If someone had told us to call it a Dog, we would have said no, that's a Grivet. *Shakespeare said a rose by any other name is still going to smell as sweet.*

It's been said there is nothing in a name, but that's not true. Once we have generally come to accept a term, there is something in that term. If someone walked up to you and said, *"I think you are an idiot or a moron"*, you will probably be offended because we have come to associate negative image with those terms. Why is it that no little boys are named Judas or little girls named Jezebel? They are both Biblical names and there is nothing wrong with them but the name Judas has become synonymous with betrayal and Jezebel with wickedness. There is very much something in a name.

That brings us to the third commandment. If there's something in our names, don't you think there is something in His? So the Lord God says, ***(Exo 20:7 KJV) Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*** We have instances in scripture where people's names were changed and every time it is significant. We know that ABRAM was a good name and that it meant *"exalted father"*, but God changed his name to ABRAHAM because that meant, *"father of many."* It seems kinda funny to call a 90-year-old man who didn't have a single child *"the father of many"* but we know from Bible history that name proved to be fitting.

His grandson, JACOB, which was a good name that meant *"he who grasps the heel"*, but figuratively it meant *"chiseler"* and that fit him too. He was going back one day to meet his brother Esau and encounters as angel who ask, *"What's your name?"* He said it was

JACOB, and the angel said “*not anymore—your name is ISRAEL*”. Israel figuratively means “*PRINCE*”. So from now on, you’re not the chiseler, you’re the prince.

The Lord Jesus meets a man named Simon. That was a good name because Simon was named after his forefather, Simeon, one of Jacob’s most impetuous sons. Jesus looks at him and said, “*From now on, your name will be Peter*” which means “*rock*”. You couldn’t have picked a name for Simon that seemed further from the truth, but the Lord saw a quality in that disciple that He was going to develop.

In every instance we have mentioned, it was the LORD changing the name of a person. Every time He changes a name, he does it because he wants to reveal something about that person, some hope, or some promise, or some character that he wants to see manifested. The greatest example of this is in Matthew 1:21. (*Matt 1:21 KJV*) ***And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.***

A man named Joseph was engaged to a girl who was named Mary, and he planned to marry her until he found out she was with child. He thought the only decent thing to do was to put her away. But the Lord told Joseph in a dream not to put her away because she had conceived by the Holy Spirit and she will have a son and you will give him the name JESUS because He will save His people from their sins. JESUS means SAVIOUR.

Why didn’t the Lord trust Joseph and Mary to give the boy a name? Parents are supposed to give names to the children, right? They would have picked a good name---they were godly people. But the Lord said, “*No, you will NOT name him—I will name him*”. To name something is to recognize that you have dominion or authority over it. You name your children. You have dominion and authority over them. God brought all of the animals to the first man, Adam, and told Adam to name them and call them whatever he wanted to. He was to have dominion over the animals. Later God gives Adam a woman...and who named her? Adam. He said, (*Gen 3:20 KJV*) ***And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.*** And when it came to His Only Begotten Son, he didn’t allow the man to name him, but HE named him because the man didn’t have dominion over Jesus, but he has dominion and lordship over man.

The point to be made is that NO WHERE does MAN ever give GOD a name. Everything we call God and every title that God has in the scripture, God gave to US. He gives US His name—we don't give God His name. And when God gives us His name, He does so because He wants to reveal to us something about Himself.

Now, there was the time at the burning bush when Moses was told to go and rescue his people, but Moses made an excuse that he didn't know who to say sent him. God said, "*Moses, tell them 'I AM' sent you. My name is 'I AM.'*" And that tells us something about God. It tells us that the most fundamental characteristic of deity is BEING. Yes, God is Love, and God is Light, and God is Spirit, but the most fundamental truth is, GOD IS, and that's what qualifies Him more than anything else to be GOD. He always WAS and He always IS and He always WILL BE.

People often say when they misuse the name of God that they didn't mean anything by that. That's exactly what the third commandment is talking about. Don't you utter the name of God if you don't mean anything by it because the name means something! It stands for something. It stands for faithfulness and eternity and it stands for sovereignty and when you use it in such a way that you don't mean what it means, you've misused it!

Jesus once speaking to the Jews about Abraham said, "*Before Abraham was, I AM.*" At that the Jews picked up stones with the idea of killing him. Apparently they thought Jesus had used the name of God in an irreverent way. But He did mean that. He did not misuse that name.

God will hold guilty those who misuse His name. To misuse His name; to know what it stands for and not to care and to make it mean something else is not taken lightly by God. One determination of your moral cleanliness is your attitude about the name of God.

Let's get down to where we live. How do we misuse or how can we misuse the name of God? We don't mean to be bad/evil when we do these things, but we need to be careful that we don't use God's name to mean something it doesn't mean. I want to mention three broad categories for using the Lord's name in vain.

**1. PROFANITY.** That's usually what people think of first when they hear this commandment. What is profanity? I'm not talking just about cussin'; I'm talking about profanity. Profanity is a Latin word. PRO means out of and "*FANIS*" means "*the temple*". "*Out of the temple*". PROFANE is to take a holy thing out of its context where it doesn't belong. You profane the holy name of God/Jesus when you take it out of its holy context and you use it to voice some unholy feelings. When you smash your thumb with a hammer or you hit a bad golf shot or you are in a traffic jam and you use the holy name of God to talk about that, you've profaned it. What good does it do anyway? Does it make your thumb feel better or make that golf shot go straighter?

Profanity is a needless habit people could stop if they wanted to. We all know people with really foul mouths do not talk like that when they are in the presence of a preacher or other people they respect. That tells me they KNOW the difference and could stop if they wanted to. It can be controlled. It is a needless, careless, vulgar habit and you don't have to do it. You can stop it.

Profanity manifests to me a problem that is much deeper. The Lord says (*Matthew 15:18 KJV*) ***But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.*** You see, it's not the thing that comes out of the mouth that makes the man defiled, but it is what's in his heart. That says that profanity is never the only problem. There is always a deeper problem than his speech. Profanity is a way we can misuse the name of God.

**2. FRIVOLOUSLY.** We misuse God's name in a frivolous way. We can use the name of God in such a context that we rob it of its reverence. God never intended for His name to be used so casually. We misuse his name when we secularize it. Have you ever heard somebody say, "*Somebody up there likes me?*" "*Sure glad the man upstairs was listening*". "*I can always count on the Big Daddy in the sky*". We don't get to give GOD names? God gives us His names—he's given us quite a few. Call me Father; call me Almighty; but he hasn't said for us to call him *The Big Daddy in the sky*. Such is a frivolous way to use His name.

**3. HYPOCRISY.** A third general way we can misuse the name of God is hypocrisy. When you use the name of God and you want to make it seem like you are using it in a religious way, but your goal is personal advancement of gain, and then you've misused His name. Some examples are when you commercialize His name to sell a product. People, who say, "*give me your business because I'm a Christian Bible class teacher*". Christianity is not something we need to advertise, but it is just something that we are to BE. God doesn't want His name used to sell shingles or siding or used cars.

Many will profane the name of the Lord who claim to be righteous. Remember what the Lord said in *Matt 7:22* "***many are going to say to me on that day LORD, LORD did we not prophesy in YOUR Name and did we not cast out demons IN YOUR NAME and did we not do many miracles IN YOUR NAME.***

Lord, we USED YOUR NAME and look at all we did with it! And the Lord is going to say, *I never knew you—you depart from me because you practiced iniquity (lawlessness).* Your life doesn't match your profession. You used my name and you conned a lot of people and you convinced a lot of people that you were really spiritual, but you don't know the first thing about my name.

*You may have heard the story about the soldier who was taken before the Emperor Alexander. The Emperor asked the soldier what his name was and he said Alexander. The Emperor asked him a second time and he again answered Alexander. He asked him a third time and he again said "Alexander". The Emperor looked him straight in the eye and said, "Well, soldier, either change your name or change your conduct."*

Pretty good counsel to Christians. If you're gonna wear that name, it's a holy name, then wear it and make it stand for what it means. Otherwise, change your name. It's a plea for integrity. Let His name mean what it means. ***(Act 4:12) Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.***

Do you wear the name Christian?

Invitation