

# Words from the Fire: Word 3

7.4.2021

Message 19

Exodus Part 2

Exodus 20:7 (ESV)

<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.

## Introduction:

A. A little over a week ago, we hosted our own kid’s camp.

1. This was a great week to provide kids the opportunity for many sorts of experiences.
2. One component was the making of soap.
  - a. It just so happened that Pastor Larissa had the kids make soap that looked and smelled identical to a cinnamon roll.
  - b. In fact, the appearance was so convincing that one of the deacons managed to convince another deacon to try a bite.
3. The eating of soap led to some fun conversations.
  - a. A whole generation of adults had stories of when their moms had washed their mouths out with soap.
  - b. I remember the time my mom got mad at one of my sisters for mouthing and there was no bar soap around so she used liquid hand soap.
  - c. This may seem barbaric by today’s standards, but there was a certain principle:

1. Don't backtalk.
2. Don't say bad words.
3. And if you do, you will "eat your words" so to speak.

B. As God is preparing His people to be a nation of priests, He gives the 3<sup>rd</sup> Word:

1. Do not take the Name of the Lord in vain.
2. If you do, the punishment was far worse than a mouth full of soap.

C. Although none of us are Jewish, and we don't go around using the name "YHWH" all of the time, this commandment is still immensely applicable for you and I today.

1. And, like each of the 10 Words, the depth of meaning is far deeper than we usually realize.
2. Today, I'm going to share why and how the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment still applies to you and I today.

## 1. What's in a name?

A. In our day and time, names are not overly significant.

1. Some of us are named after a relative or a favorite person your parents liked.
2. We have people whose names are more appropriate for Scrabble.
  - a. For example: Elon Musk named his kid boy,
  - b. **X Æ A-Xii**
  - c. Random: Iceland requires names to be preapproved before they can be put on the birth-certificate.

B. Naming rituals haven't always been this way.

1. Most cultures, especially ancient cultures, used names as a way to predict the future of the child or would change the name of an adult to fit a specific trait.
2. Jesus changed Simon's name to "Peter/Cephas".
3. One mother named her child "Ichabod" in response to the tragedy of Israel's defeat.
4. Name's meant something in ancient cultures.

C. God's declaration against using His name in vain is intended to protect the honor and character of God.

1. To dishonor a name is to dishonor the person.
2. In Exodus 3, God revealed himself to Moses as YHWH, I am that I am.
3. Literally God's name means "I am who I am" or "I will be who I will be." It speaks of God's self-existence, self-sufficiency, and supreme sovereignty. As the events of the exodus unfolded, it also testified to his saving power.<sup>1</sup>
4. What is at stake is more than a name.
  - a. God's name is synonymous with God's identity.
  - b." ...for the Hebrews the name was inseparable from the person. It expressed a person's inward identity. When we use the name of God, therefore, we are referring to the essence of his divine being."<sup>2</sup>
4. When Scripture says, "All who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" what we are invited to do is to call upon the identity, the essence of God.
5. When I misrepresent His name, I misrepresent His identity and His essence.

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, [\*Exodus: Saved for God's Glory\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 578.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, [\*Exodus: Saved for God's Glory\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 578.

2. This Commandment isn't merely about what we say, it is about how we live and represent God.

A. Context is key.

1. God has called Israel to be a Nation of Priests.
2. They were called to represent God to the Surrounding peoples.
3. God always intended for the world to be blessed and saved through the ministry of Israel.
4. Israel was going to represent God in a new land, among a new people.
5. And Israel had better not slander God's character and essence among the Nations.

B. Eventually, the Jews would not allow anyone to pronounce the name of God, so that they could not blaspheme.

1. The Jews substituted the name Adonai "Lord" everytime they needed to use God's name.
2. "The reason is that during the Second Temple period, most likely in the early 5th century B.C.E., Jews decided that that name was ineffable, too holy to be uttered aloud. This was based on a particular interpretation of the third commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."<sup>3</sup>
3. By Jesus' time, the name of the Lord had not been pronounced outside of the Temple for almost 500 years.
4. No wonder the religious leaders wanted to stone Jesus every time He mentioned His father's name!

C. God's intention for this commandment was so that Israel would represent Him well before the nations.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.haaretz.com/archaeology/.premium.MAGAZINE-we-shouldn-t-take-god-s-name-in-vain-but-what-is-it-1.6546806>

1. Using or bearing his name in any scandalous way in the ancient Near East dishonored him before the nations—misrepresenting him to the ones to whom they themselves were to declare his name. As priests and a holy nation before the other nations of the world (Exod 19:5–6), they were to bear the name of their God to honor him.<sup>4</sup>

2. There is much more at stake in this commandment than not saying God’s name at inappropriate times.

3. This commandment is concerned with God’s people honoring God in a sinful world.

4. *Why would the world ever turn to the One True God if God’s people demeaned His name before them?*

### 3. We have bigger problems with Blasphemy than we realize.

A. We are not prohibited in saying God’s name today.

1. In fact, Jesus now invites us to “call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.”

2. If we ask anything, in Jesus’ name, and do not doubt, it shall be given.

3. Because of Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension, we have the opportunity to declare the name of the Lord.

a. The Name that the Jews had labeled “ineffable” is to be on the lips of the Gentiles.

b. Not only is His name on our lips, but in Acts 15 we see the fulfillment of Amos 9”

[Act 15:16-18 NIV] 16 " 'After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, 17 that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, *even all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things*'-- 18 things known from long ago.

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<sup>4</sup> Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, ed. H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick, vol. 2, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), 43.

B. We are bearers of the Lord's name.

1. Exodus 20 didn't say "do not speak my name".
2. Exodus 20 said do not bear it in vain.
3. In other words, do not carry or speak about God's presence, essence, glory, and power in an unworthy way.

**C. I misuse God's name when I choose to dishonor God with my conduct.**

1. Growing up, the worst thing I could do as a kid was to embarrass my parents.
2. When I worked for Sonic, we had a policy that limited what we could do while we wore our work uniform.
3. For those of you who served in the military, you were to never dishonor the uniform.
  - a. The uniform represented more than yourself.
  - b. It represented all that your service stands for and all of the people who have given for that same cause.

**D. As Christians, when we live contradictory to Christ's claim on us, we misuse the name of the Lord our God.**

James 3:1-12 (ESV)

### **Taming the Tongue**

**3** Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. (COULD THIS BE BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF REPRESENTING JESUS APPROPRIATELY AND WELL?) <sup>2</sup> For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. <sup>3</sup> If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. <sup>4</sup> Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder

wherever the will of the pilot directs. <sup>5</sup> So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! <sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup> For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, <sup>8</sup> but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup> With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. <sup>10</sup> From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. <sup>11</sup> Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? <sup>12</sup> Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

1. When we profess Jesus with our mouth and give the rest of our body to the devil, we are taking Jesus' name in vain.
2. When we have a culture that is excited by Oscar winners who thank God for winning an award for a movie that is full of profanity, simulated sex, and drug use, we are taking the name of the Lord in vain.
3. When sessions of Congress evoke the name of other gods, we are misusing the Name of God and misrepresenting Him to the Nations.
4. When I worship God with my lips and speak in tongues on Sunday, but my mouth is full of profanity, gossip, lying, and deceit, I'm misrepresenting the Name of the Lord and taking His name in vain.

1. [Col 3:8 CSB] 8 But now, put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth.

2. [Eph 4:29 CSB] 29 No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear.

## Close: Am I misrepresenting Jesus?

A. The question for us today is, "Am I representing Jesus to my family and neighbors well?"

1. Am I bearing God's name with honor, power, and authority?
2. Or am I, even unknowingly, taking His name in vain.

B. Today is an opportunity for us to examine our lives in view of God's name.

1. Am I representing Jesus well?
2. Naturally, this is impossible.
  - a. But thankfully, Jesus has sent us the Holy Spirit to empower us for witness.
  - b. Jesus has given us good and perfect gifts so that the impossible can become possible.

C. Where do I start?

1. If you are using God and Jesus flippantly, stop.
2. If your mouth is not as clean as it should be, pray for help and then be mindful of your words. "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight or Lord my strength and my redeemer."
3. All of us, let us ask God to cleanse us and fill us with His Holy Spirit so that we may be the bearers of the Name that is above all names.
  - a. For someday soon, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, YHWH.
  - b. Let us pray.