

3rd Commandment Part 1

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[0 : 00] Sticks and stones will break your bones, but names will never hurt you.

That little ditty is wrong at so many levels. In the first place, it's simply not true, as many here, I'm sure, perhaps all of us have on occasion painfully experienced. Names can be much more hurtful than sticks and stones. They may not break bones, indeed, they do not, but they can cause much greater damage, and often do, than sticks and stones. So, even at that level, it is way off a beam. But secondly, and of more concern to us as we introduce what we want to share this evening concerning the third commandment, this ditty reflects a notion that a name, be it good or bad, is not a matter of great significance. A name. It's just a name. We sometimes say that, well, it's just a name, just a label, the tag on a present, but not the present itself. And we all know, of course, the present is so much more important than the tag, the label that identifies it. That is how many think. But God takes a different view. And the third commandment deals specifically with this matter of how we handle, how we rightly handle the name of the Lord our God. We read in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 7, You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuse his name. Names in the Bible are important. I think that is a truth familiar to us.

They don't only identify, they often describe. Now, one very topical example we find in the words of the angel of the Lord to Joseph that will have been read a zillion times in the past couple of days. You are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. This name that would identify the one to be born, but that primarily describes him as the Savior. But as we consider the importance of names and very particularly the name of God, we can go further than simply say that a name not only identifies and not only describes, but we can say something further, particularly with reference to the name of God. And that is that the name represents and is intrinsic to the very identity of the God who bears the name. We have already sung this evening in Psalm 75. We give thanks to you, O God, for your name is near. For the psalmist to speak of the name of God being near was to state that God was near. So, not just a label, not just a description, but the name as being that which represents and is indeed intrinsic to the very being of God. Now, if we understand the name of God in that manner, that has a necessary consequence, maybe many necessary consequences. One of them, the commandment itself, but one other that I would just mention by way of introduction.

[4 : 06] If the name of God not only identifies God, not only describes God in a measure, but in a very real way represents Him and is intrinsic to His identity, then the name necessarily carries great weight. It's not just a name. Again, reminding us of what we have just sung in Psalm 29.

Listen to the psalmist. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to His name.

Where the Hebrew word there translated glory, the Hebrew word kabod has as its root meaning to be heavy or weighty. The idea being that the name of God carries weight. It is a weighty name. And as a weighty name, it is not to be trifled with. It is not to be used lightly.

It is a name that we must ascribe glory and weight to. Not surprising then that we would have this commandment.

Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God. Well, with these words of introduction, let's proceed to consider the commandment in the following way.

[5 : 35] There are three questions that we'll ask and attempt to answer. First of all, what is this name? You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. Well, what name is being spoken of? That's the first thing.

But then ask the question, how can the name be trashed? This is what is forbidden. Don't trash the name. How can the name be trashed? But then the other side of the coin and unnecessary question to be asked and answered.

How can the name be treasured? We are not to trash the name. We are to treasure the name. Well, let's just consider for a moment how we can be guilty of trashing the name and how we can treasure the name as we ought.

Now, in order to do justice to these questions, or at least a measure of justice to these questions, we are not going to rush through them and try to answer them all this evening.

We are going to cover this material in two evenings. And this evening we will limit ourselves to the first question, what is the name? And then, God willing, next Sunday evening we can consider how we can be guilty of trashing the name of God, and how we can enjoy the privilege of treasuring that name.

[7 : 05] First of all then, what is the name? Now, while we can, indeed we must, legitimately extend the prohibition of this commandment to the various names of God, we know that God in the process of His self-revelation in Scripture has revealed Himself with many different names.

And so, recognizing that to be so, we, I repeat, can and must take this commandment as being one that would prohibit the misuse of any of these many and various names.

Now, that is clearly so. But while that is so, it is right to particularly focus on the very name that God uses for Himself as He addresses and relates to His people in the very covenant documents that He delivers to them.

That is, the Ten Commandments. We have already read in Exodus chapter 3 how in the very context of God dealing with His people, redeeming His people, He reveals very particularly one name by which He is to be known.

And so, while I repeat, this commandment can rightly be applied to all the many and various names of God, this evening we want to think particularly of the name with which He reveals Himself, indeed, even as He delivers these commandments.

[8 : 46] Well, what is that name? Well, we have already come across it. We have already encountered it at the beginning of the Ten Commandments in the prologue. I am the Lord your God.

This is the name with which God identifies Himself to His people. I am the Lord your God. And then, of course, in the very commandment that is the matter we are concerned with this evening, again, we come across this same name.

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name.

This name, very particularly then, is the one that God is protecting from misuse. This is the name that God would build a hedge round, that it would not be abused or misused by His people.

This name, the Lord. Not a title, as we might initially imagine, but a name. And what can we say about this name?

[9 : 55] Well, in our English Bibles, certainly in the New International Version, which we have as the Church Bible, we find the name Lord in capital letters.

You'll notice there in the verse that is our matter for consideration this evening, there on the two occasions where we have this word, this name Lord, it's in capital letters.

Now, on every occasion where we find this name Lord in capital letters, it is translating the Hebrew name Yahweh.

Or, as in the past we would have named that name Jehovah, the same name, just an evolving understanding of the pronunciation.

So, when we find, as we do here in verse 7, the name Lord, it is translating that Hebrew name Yahweh. Now, this name of God, Yahweh, appears as God's name from the very beginning.

[11 : 00] We've read, and we're going to notice in a moment, how God in a particular way reveals His name to Moses. But this was, of course, not the first time that God had revealed this name.

We can go back to the very beginning, to Genesis chapter 2 and verse 4. And there we read, When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

And here, at the very beginning, it is this name Yahweh, translated Lord in our Bibles. Indeed, in chapter 4, where we find Seth as the one who replaced Abel, and who represents the godly line of those who worship God, as he is introduced to us.

We there read that the end of chapter 4 of Genesis, At that time, men began to call on the name of the Lord. So, not simply do we find that in Genesis is he described by that name, but we're told that even at that time, men called on the name of the Lord, on Yahweh.

But its use continues to be found as we read of God's calling of Abraham, and of his dealings with Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph.

[12 : 22] But then, we have the Egyptian captivity. And following the 400 years of captivity in Egypt, the name is once again revealed to Moses at the burning bush.

We've read the passage. Now, in a sense, it's strange to speak of the name being revealed to Moses if the name was not a new name, as we are making clear.

In what sense was this name being revealed, if this was already a name by which God had made himself known? Perhaps the explanation for speaking of what we have there in Exodus chapter 3 as a revelation of the name, which I think is legitimate language, perhaps we can understand it by means of two complementary explanations for, if you wish, the need of this new revelation of the name.

The first possibility, and I wouldn't put it any stronger than that, but the first possibility is that in captivity, in those 400 years, the name had fallen into misuse and been largely forgotten, and so needed to be rediscovered, or perhaps not rediscovered, the people needed to be told again the name of their God.

That is a possibility, and it certainly is what is suggested by the passage that we read in Exodus chapter 3, when Moses says, Well, when they ask me who you are, what your name is, that seems a strange thing that the people would ask.

[14 : 06] Why would they ask that? Well, perhaps, because in the centuries that had passed, they had fallen so far away that even memory of the name had dimmed.

But another possible explanation, I think certainly a more significant explanation, is that in the purpose of God, at this point, in his ongoing and cumulative revelation of himself, it was his purpose to grant a clearer understanding of the meaning of the name.

So, here, as we have read in Exodus chapter 3 at the burning bush, the purpose is not simply to say, By the way, this is my name, Yahweh.

You've forgotten what my name is. Well, I want to remind you, this is my name, it's Yahweh. God's purpose goes beyond simply reminding them what he's called. He wants to reveal, wants to grant them greater understanding of the meaning of this name that he bears.

Well, what is revealed at the burning bush concerning the name? Well, its meaning is given to us, so we don't need to spend a great deal of time in complex analysis of the words, of the Hebrew words.

[15 : 30] There are many who do that, and no doubt, to great prophet or to some prophet. But this evening that isn't necessary, for we are told, God himself tells Moses what the meaning of his name is.

God said to Moses, I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites. I am has sent me to you.

Well, what does this name, with this meaning, tell us about God? This name that we are not to misuse. This name that we are to handle carefully and reverently.

What does this name, and the meaning that it is given by God, tell us about God? Well, here again, there is much that could be said, but we limit ourselves to the following.

At the most basic level, this name tells us that he exists. I am that I am. I am.

[16 : 35] He exists. God declares, I exist. He is, in the words of Francis Schaeffer, the God who is there.

He exists. He exists. A very simple, if you wish, a very basic statement, but one that is found, and that is at the heart of this name, by which God calls himself.

I am that I am. I am. I exist. If we can develop that a little further, or dig a little deeper, not as deep as it might be possible, or certainly is possible, but dig a little deeper, we can state that the name declares that he is.

He is, in the sense that he is the self-existent one. He never became. He is. He is. I am. He has no beginning.

At this time, we're thinking, and rightly so, and it is a good thing to consider and to ponder on the wonder of the birth of Jesus.

[17:44] That is what we have been doing in these past days. But as we think of the wonder of it, is it not the case that the mind-blowing wonder of the incarnation, of immeasurably greater wonder than even the miracle of the virgin birth, wondrous though that is, is that in the incarnation, God, the great I am, God experiences becoming.

The great I am becomes. That that could be stated in a sentence is something that is worthy of great admiration.

The great I am, I am that I am, in the incarnation becomes. Now, to develop that just a very little, or to see where that is most vividly expressed, we turn to John's Gospel in chapter 1.

Again, these are words that are very familiar to us. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word was God.

The Word was God. And yet, the Word who was God of verse 1 is the Word who becomes flesh in verse 14.

[19:09] The Word became flesh. In God, I am that I am. We discover wonder of wonders becoming.

He became flesh. So, this name speaks of a God who exists, a God who is self-existent, a God who has no beginning.

But as we develop this, we can go on to say that the name reveals that the eternal God is unchangeable, inexhaustible. Certainly, this name points in that direction.

Perhaps for us to state that firmly and categorically, we would have to, together with the significance of the name, draw abundant biblical material that would reinforce that, or together confirm that.

But certainly, the name points in that direction of a God who is eternal, unchangeable, and inexhaustible. When we think of the occasion when God chose to reveal the name, or certainly to reveal with a greater measure of understanding and explanation, there at the burning bush, we can't divorce the burning bush from the words that God spoke.

[20:27] And it's the burning bush, and it's the burning bush that provides the backdrop or the occasion for the revelation of the name. And the bush that burned was not consumed.

This was what drew the attention of Moses. When we think of the burning bush, and of the significance of the burning bush, and what even the symbolism of the burning bush teaches us concerning God, there is often a focus on the flame, on the fire, and what that tells us concerning God.

And that is legitimate, and it is stated, the point is made, that that represents God's holiness, God's refining purity. The fire represents these truths concerning God, and I'm quite happy to accept that as being a reasonable conclusion.

But the primary significance of the burning bush isn't the burning. That a bush should burn wasn't particularly remarkable. Moses, no doubt, on different occasions would have seen a burning bush. The flames that he saw were familiar to him. What drew his attention was that the bush was not consumed. This was the remarkable thing. This was the thing that stopped him in his tracks, that he had to consider what is going on here.

[21:47] The flames, yes, but the flames did not consume the bush. And there, when we draw that picture together with the name that God reveals to Moses, Moses, I am that I am.

We, together, I think, see this picture of a God who is eternal, inexhaustible, who does not burn out. He burns and burns and burns and continues burning eternally.

We have the expression, don't we, of those who burn out. Young professionals in the city of London, and it's all go, and then by their late twenties they've burnt out.

We speak of ministers burning out. We speak of different folks burning out. Well, in the God who reveals himself with this name, I am that I am, we have a God who never burns out.

He is inexhaustible, unchangeable. Now, notice as we consider these things or suggest these truths concerning God that are revealed by this name, notice that the importance of these truths are not in the first place for us to be able to write a chapter in a book on systematic theology, if ever we were so foolish as to attempt that, concerning the nature of God.

[23:12] Well, we can say these things. He exists. He is self-existent. He is eternal. He is unchangeable. All of these things are true, and they're important. But they're not so important simply as statements, doctrinal statements that we can memorize and be proud of our knowledge concerning who God is.

Their primary importance, certainly as God reveals the name to Moses, was that God, through Moses, would assure his people of his irrevocable commitment to his people.

He says, I am the unchanging God. I am the God who is inexhaustible. My commitment to my people is unchanging and inexhaustible.

Just as the bush never burns, so my love for my people, or rather, the bush is never consumed, so the love for my people is an eternal love.

And so, these truths are granted, are revealed by God through Moses to his people.

[24 : 18] This is the name that is not to be misused. But as we think just a little more about this name, Yahweh, the Lord, this name to which new and deeper meaning was given at the burning bush, this name enjoys a yet fuller revelation of its depth, of its beauty, and of its wonder, and consequently, of the God who bears the name, and a subsequent revelation.

We've already noticed that at the very beginning, God is identified. He identifies himself with this name. We notice how at the burning bush, there is a greater explanation given, greater content given, if you wish, to this name that was familiar, if perhaps forgotten.

But there is a subsequent revelation, where the name is given its fullest meaning. And when was that? Well, we've been celebrating that subsequent occasion in these days.

It was, of course, at the coming of Jesus, at the incarnation, when the Word became flesh, that we find the fullest revelation of the name, of this name, Yahweh, the Lord.

And why do we say that? Why do we say that with the coming of Jesus, this name is given its fullest significance? Or, in any case, it is revealed to us the fullest significance of it?

[25 : 58] Well, we say that because Jesus is the Lord. Jesus is Yahweh. Now, that, perhaps, in a measure, is a bold statement, but it is one that can be, and now I will attempt to, substantiate.

Why can we say that Jesus is Yahweh? And if Jesus is Yahweh, then we are able to declare that in Him we find the fullest revelation of the name.

Well, just very briefly, in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, a translation that was current at the time that Jesus was in the world at the time, of course, also, of the New Testament writers, and it was known to them and familiar to them.

The name Septuagint just arrives from the word seventy, and tradition has it that there were seventy scholars who were involved in this translation.

Well, in this Greek translation of the Old Testament, as I say and repeat, familiar to Jesus and the New Testament writers, and indeed given the seal of approval by them as they quoted from it, In that Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Hebrew name Yahweh, the Hebrew name Yahweh is translated by the Greek word kurios.

[27 : 35] And the Greek word kurios means Lord. Hence, in the English translation, the translators have chosen reasonably to use the word Lord to translate Yahweh.

Why? Because in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word kurios, which means Lord, was used by the translators. And as I say, that translation given a divine seal of approval by its very use in the New Testament.

Now, the importance of this is that Greek-speaking Jews would have identified the God of the Old Testament, the God who revealed His covenant name as Yahweh, I am who I am, with the name kurios.

For them, it would have been entirely reasonable as they hear the name kurios, and certainly as they hear Jesus being described or named as kurios, to immediately identify that with the Septuagint use of that word translating the Hebrew word Yahweh.

For them, Yahweh and kurios were practically synonymous, simply the same name of God in different languages. So, they're different languages. But it's the same name.

[29 : 00] Now, if I can really say the same thing in another way. And here, for those of you who might be interested in exploring this a little further, here I'm simply going to read a quote from, it's one of Donald MacLeod's books.

It's not Behold Your God, it's one of the other ones that name escaped me right now, A Faith to Live By. And in that, there's a chapter concerning the divinity of Jesus.

And I just read one sentence there where he develops this theme concerning how in the Septuagint, the Greek word kurios is used to translate Yahweh.

The importance of all this is that when the apostles called Jesus Lord, as they did, they were ascribing to Jesus the word used by Greek-speaking Jews as equivalent to Yahweh.

So, when we say that Jesus is Lord, as we do, it is the great Christian testimony. And indeed, it is what identifies us as Christians that we declare Jesus is Lord.

[30 : 10] When we say that Jesus is Lord, we are saying exactly that Jesus is Yahweh. So, God, whose name is Yahweh, the name that we are not to misuse, the name that God is careful to protect in the giving of this commandment, God, whose name is Yahweh, can only be fully known in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the mirror of deity, the perfect image of God. And if we limit ourselves, and it is no limitation to the words of Scripture, to the words of Paul in his letter to the Colossians, in chapter 1 and verse 15, where Jesus is described as the image of invisible God, or the writer to the Hebrews in the first chapter and verse 3, what do we read there?

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being. He is, as we've also noted there in the first chapter of John's Gospel, He is the Word became flesh and capable of being seen.

We can see Him. We can see Him. Again, as it says a little on in that chapter, we beheld His glory. The glory of God, the Shekinah glory, the glory that no man could see and remain standing, indeed remain alive.

That glory became visible in the person of Jesus. We beheld His glory, full of grace and truth.

[31 : 55] That Jesus is, as Paul declares, as the writer to the Hebrew declares, that Jesus is the one who perfectly presents the image of God, is declared most eloquently by Jesus Himself.

You remember the occasion when he was in dialogue with Philip. Philip was concerned that Jesus was going to leave them. And Jesus spoke of going to His Father, and Philip was saying, Well, where's He, and how can we find Him?

And remember the conclusion of that dialogue, the words of Jesus in John 14 and verse 9. What then is the name that we must not misuse?

What is the name that must not be trashed, but rather treasured? It is this name that God has given to Himself, Yahweh, Kurios, the Lord.

Yes, as we have stated earlier on, every name that God has chosen to use to reveal Himself, to describe Himself, must be honored and treated with due respect.

[33 : 18] But this is the name by which God has chosen to reveal Himself particularly and especially, the Lord, Yahweh, the name of God, the name of Jesus, the name that is above every name, the name before whom every knee shall bow, and the name that every tongue shall confess.

Now, as we close what we wish to say this evening, as I mentioned earlier, we will go on next week to develop how we can be guilty of that terrible sin of trashing His name, of misusing His name, and also how we can be granted the privilege of treasuring His name, and how we can do that.

Well, that for another occasion or for next week. But as we do close, we do ask ourselves the question, as we consider this name that is above every name, is your knee, is my knee bent before that name?

Does my tongue, does your tongue confess this name as the name that is above every name? God grant that it would be so.

Let's pray.ou ■■■■■. What do you expect the moment to be said with your chest? Everything. This has been a reorganization■.

[34 : 50] Part 3 is a reorganization. Now, the three of which we ask for you is to increase the strength of your chest, it Ngoc, is the Republic of Attack, that Nm 2002 is MAL regardez, so here we will perform how youUnistersled ISA,