



... the unjust knows no shame. – Zephaniah 3:5

TAKING THE LORD'S NAME IN VAIN

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

It is a deadly sin to carelessly or falsely claim to know Christ. The Third Commandment is often cited, but rarely understood or appreciated. Indeed, if we don't understand the command how can we obey it?

The most common interpretation of the Third Commandment (“**You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain**”) is an injunction against speaking the Lord's name in connection with a verbal curse or in a disparaging or abusive context. This error has been perpetuated by the churches and people ignorant of what the Bible actually teaches.

It's easy to overlook the third Commandment when there are other more serious-sounding commands to think about. But when we take his name upon us it is a very serious thing. If we underestimate the importance of the Third Commandment we are asking for spiritual trouble.

An unjust man cares nothing about the shame he brings upon himself by claiming to be Christian. Those who claim to be Christians but don't reflect the light of Christ are bringing shame upon Christ's name. That amounts to “taking his name in vain.”

It behooves us to look into this question because it is very dangerous to take the Lord's name in vain. In other words, this sin is as deadly as the other nine (worshipping false gods, idolatry, forgetting the Sabbath, dishonoring your father and mother, murder, adultery, theft, lying, or coveting).

You need to know what it means to take his name in vain. You need to know because this sin can wreck your life.

“TAKING THE NAME”

To “take the name” of someone is to declare a real connection with him. When my wife took my name (Mrs. Ben Williams) she accepted and declared connection with

me. From that moment on she represented me (my name). Her actions from that day forward represented not only her but me as well. And from that point on my actions reflected upon her. If a wife acts well it reflects favorably upon her husband. If she acts poorly she can bring shame upon him. This is true also with a careless husband who brings shame upon his wife.

A wife can bless her husband by representing him wisely and in a godly way. Or she can cause great harm to him and his reputation by acting in an uncomely or ungodly manner. She did not have this power to affect his name before she became his wife. When my wife took my name she became responsible for keeping our family name reputable (and this she has done well). In this we both share the responsibility to not bring shame upon our name.

By the same token, a “son” has the power to affect how the world sees his father.

1. *“A good name is to be desired above great riches,*

Proverbs 22:1.

When we claim to be followers of Jesus we take his name. This is explained in Scripture using the example of marriage. We, as citizens of New Jerusalem, become part of Christ's symbolic bride.

2. *And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down (emanating) from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Jesus).*

Revelation 21:2

The husband/wife example describing our relationship to Jesus is repeated several times in scripture.

22. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*
23. *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the ecclesia: and he is the saviour of the body.*

24. *Therefore as the ecclesia is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.*
 25. *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the ecclesia, and gave himself for it;*
 Ephesians 5:22-25

When we claim connection to Christ we take his name to ourselves as a wife takes the name of her husband. When we take his name we'd better take it seriously.

7. *Take not the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain.*
 Exodus 20:7

Another way scripture defines what it means to "take the name" is in the designation of "sons." When a child comes of age, at a certain point his father can declare him a "son." At that time the son receives authority in the name of his father. The actual term for this is "**sonship**" (mistranslated "adoption" in the KJV). The meaning of **sonship** is somewhat like today's legal term "power of attorney." It means that a son has authority to represent the interests of the father. He has authority to do business and act on behalf of his father ... and his father stands guarantor of the son's actions.

While he was a "child" he could not do this. But when he matures and is declared to be a "son" (Greek "huios") he is given authority to act in the name of his father. There is a distinct difference between a "child" and a "son." The phrase "in his name" literally means "by his authority."

1. *Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;*
 7. *Wherefore you are no more a servant, but a **son**; and if a **son**, then an heir of God through Christ.*
 Galatians 4:1, 7
 14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the **sons** of God.*
 15. *For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of **sonship**, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*
 Romans 8:14-15

"Abba" is a Hebrew/Aramaic term of endearment, as used by a son when speaking to a beloved father. Paul is pointing out that the spirit of **sonship** is a close, trusted, and mutually dear relationship between son and father.

5. *Foreordaining **sonship** in us through Jesus Christ, in Him, according to the good pleasure of his will,*
 Ephesians 1:5

At the age of twelve, Jesus was already thinking in terms of his role as Son.

49. *... know you not that it is necessary for me to be in the work of my Father?*
 Luke 2:49

God left no doubt that Jesus is his "Son." He publicly declared it. In Matthew 3:11 & 17:5 God spoke audibly to the disciples, stating that Jesus "*is my beloved SON in whom I am well pleased.*"

Also, in Acts 2:35, 5:31, Hebrews 10:12, 12:2, and 1 Peter 3:22 we are told plainly that Jesus sits "*at the right hand of his Father.*" This idiom means that Jesus is given all authority by his Father as his "right hand" (Matthew 28:18).

SONS CANNOT BE LUKEWARM

15. *I know your actions, that you are neither cold nor hot: I would you were cold or hot.*
 16. *So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.*
 17. *Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*
 18. *I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.*

Revelation 3:15-18

God wants us to step up to the plate! He wants us to take his name and act as sons. That cannot happen for people who insist on remaining selfish children. It can only happen when we stop following the lusts of our bellies. We must take the name of Christ seriously. Otherwise, we have no right to claim the label of "Christian." We cannot represent Christ if we are representing the flesh with its deceptions and lusts.

14. *Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness?*
 15. *And what concord has Christ with Belial? or what part has he that believes with an infidel?*
 16. *And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*
 17. *Wherefore come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,*
 18. *And will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.*

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

SONSHIP CONFERS RESPONSIBILITY

It is easy to call yourself a Christian. But it takes more to actually follow Christ. Many people in this land claim to be Christians while they chase after the things of this world system. In deed, most are churchgoers, and we know that churches are NOT of Christ! Plus, I see people who might be called "nominal Christians" (i.e., they like to think of

themselves as Christians but invest no effort or time to learn or do the things of Christ.). They are not followers of Christ. These are people who take the Lord's name in vain.

46. *And why call you me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*

Luke 6:46

21. *Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

Matthew 7:21

The way we speak, the way we conduct ourselves, the kinds of habits we indulge in, the kind of music or entertainment (so called) we prefer, the kind of people we keep company with ... these things define us. These things define our souls ... what others see in us.

We should be asking whether Jesus likes the things we prefer. Would He prefer these things? Would He indulge in the activities and choices we make? **DO OUR CHOICES BRING SHAME UPON HIM AND UPON HIS NAME?**

JESUS GAVE HIS ALL

What should we give? We can give Him the respect He deserves. We can do that by asking Him what He would have us to do.

Serving God is a serious commitment ... for which Jesus gave his life. Following Christ means we stop wasting our lives like foolish children.

Do you want to step up to the plate and do something for Jesus? Commit yourself to represent Him. You cannot do that unless you know Him, and you cannot know Him without putting time into researching Scripture.

29. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.*

Matthew 11:29

In who will you trust? The world system, or Christ? You cannot trust both. Jesus explained that we cannot serve two masters. If we identify with the philosophy of this world, we cannot identify with Christ, for we will love one and despise the other.

24. *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

Matthew 6:24

Mammon is not just money as it is often defined. It is all the little things that relate to the world, and the world follows money. The things of the world are taught by the universities, the corporations, the government, and the churches. If we let those sources define "success" for us, we are lost. Advantage over other people is what this world defines as "success." That mentality motivated the Sanhedrin to kill Christ. That mentality infects the minds of all who follow

mammon. That mentality hates Jesus. And others hate Him ignorantly because they don't know Him.

Some folks may say, "I don't hate Christ, but I don't hate the world either." Or, they may say, "Well, we do have to live in this world so we must fit in so we can survive."

People who think this way obviously do not grasp the teachings of Christ or why He is hated. They obviously do not know what is meant by "the world system," nor do they understand why Jesus was murdered by the Sanhedrin.

Jesus teaches us how to love the brethren. The world system, on the other hand, teaches us how to love self and take advantage of others. Competition, self worship, self indulgence, self interest ... these are the things of the world system.

15. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

16. *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

1 John 2:16

This is truth, and it deserves our attention. We need to examine ourselves and take this into our hearts.

SELF EVALUATION

Perhaps some may not understand this. They may be unable to evaluate themselves. It is not easy to take an honest look at ourselves and admit that our preferences clash with God's ... that we are following our fleshly lusts.

We need to know that we are responsible for our words and deeds. They point to the condition of our hearts:

44. *Each tree is known by its fruit ...*

45. *A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.*

Luke 6:44-45

33: *Be not misled, bad associations corrupt good customs.*

1 Corinthians 15:33

We can bring shame upon the name of Jesus if we claim to be Christians but worship the Beast System.

He does not ask us to be flawless. He does not condemn us for temporary weaknesses and slip ups. But if we blatantly and routinely take his name in vain we will answer for it. That sin will find us out. It will turn us so that our lives are on a low and deprived plane.

On the other hand, if we honestly trust and honor Christ, and if we do not take his name in vain, our lives will be lifted up and helped in wonderful ways. I pray that you will not miss out on this blessing. I pray that you will not neglect your responsibility and great privilege to live for Christ in all things in your life. This is truly the way to enjoy the good life!

REFLECT CHRIST'S LIGHT AND LIFE, NOT THE DARKNESS OF THE WORLD

sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water."

Hebrews 10:22

Words and actions reveal our very selves, the truth of who we are. They testify whether we are flippant and careless regarding Christ, or if we take Him and his work seriously. We know this because we cannot fit in with the world and at the same time claim to be followers of Christ. Christ does not fit in with the world. The world murdered Him and would murder again if it could. If the world hates Christ, why would anyone think it possible to be friends with the world and with Christ? If you are a friend of the world system then you are no friend of Christ!

4. *You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

James 4:4

15. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

1 John 2:15

It is not difficult to understand this teaching. What is difficult is self-examination ... being truthful. So, all that is left to do is for us to honestly ask ourselves if we are honoring Christ by the way we live. Can people see Christ in you ... or do they see only you and your fleshly lusts? How much time and effort do you invest into searching the Bible and asking Christ to teach you? Compared to the time you invest in worldly pursuits, how much time do you invest in Christ? Think about it ... please!

You are stewards of your life. If Christ walked into your life what would He see? Would you be ashamed? Perhaps a better question is, should you be ashamed? How much time do you invest in worthless, childish, worldly pursuits? Do you have faith in the ways of the world system? What do you support with your time and your faith? To what are you giving yourself? What kind of image do you present to those around you? Do you inspire others to seek Christ? Or do you embolden them to pursue the depravity of Hollywood, the false hope of Wall Street, and the deceptive and arrogant power of Washington D.C.?

God speaks harshly about those who misrepresent Him and speak lies in his name. The third command cautions us from portraying ourselves as followers of Jesus when we are actually following the customs of the world system.

12. *Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.*

Leviticus 19:12

God wants us to grow up and become sons in the true sense. It is serious business to take the name of God.

The writer of Hebrews emphasizes the importance of sincerity:

22. *Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts*

We send powerful messages when we identify with Jesus' name. We have the ability to shine a light for Christ, or to bring shame upon ourselves, and so bring shame upon Christ whom we claim to follow. Small things matter.

26. *If anyone thinks to be pious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his heart, his piety is vain.*

James 1:26

Taking Christ's name carries serious ramifications. If we take his name in vain we are only tricking ourselves and due to see hard times. Take this time to inventory your life. Examine yourself and your home. Ask the hard and honest questions of yourself. Are you giving time and effort to serve Christ? He gave his life to reach your heart. Don't resist Him! Let Him change you! Accept what He has to offer you to make your life immeasurably better.

Are you struggling with something? Let Jesus help you. Put Him first instead of yourself. This is the sure way to be blessed in your endeavors.

Are you lost in a sea of confusion? Let Jesus help you.

Are you worried about your children? Put Jesus first and let your children see Him in you.

Are you struggling with bad habits? Remove yourself from the center of your world and put Jesus there instead. You'll be surprised how easy you can reorder your life.

Do you claim to be a follower of Christ? How many people can see it? Do the people you are around each day see Christ in you? Or do they see a coward who is ashamed to be associated with Christ?

Do you fear being unpopular with people? Jesus offended nearly everyone He was around.

13. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

1 John 3:13

18. *If the world hate you, know that it hated me before it hated you.*

John 15:18

Does the world hate you? If not, **why**? If the world hates Christ what should it feel about you? If you are seeking acceptance with those who hate Jesus, what does that say about you? If you claim to be a Christian and also wish to fit in with the world system, how can you justify this? Does not this bring shame on Christ's name?

Should you worry that people will not like you if they find out that you believe in the laws of God, or that you believe there is a difference between right and wrong, or that you wish to stand for what's right?

Let us learn the true meaning of success and prosperity. Let us stand for Jesus, not for the world!

God keep you.

Ben Williams