

“You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain” (Exodus 20:7) – KJV.

The Third Commandment is translated in various versions: “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name” (NIV); “No using the name of GOD, your God, in curses or silly banter; GOD won’t put up with the irreverent use of his name” (The Message Bible).

The Third Commandment –third rule – tells us to use the name of God with the proper reverence and worship of God, and it relates with the Lord’s Sabbath as well. God has various names such as Elohim, El, or YHWH. God is known and revealed by the name of YHWH to Moses.

In the book of Exodus, the Bible says, “But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ What shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations” (Exod. 3:13-15). The name of God Yehweh means “I am who I am.”

A few weeks ago an interesting news item on heaven and God attracted many people’s attention. Dr. Stephen Hawking, who is the famous physics professor at the University of Cambridge, declared that no heaven exists and there is no God; heaven is just a fairytale story and God is just imaginary. On the contrary, a seven year old boy wrote a book with his father entitled “*Heaven is for Real: A Little Boy’s Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back,*” and that book became popular. A survey was done showing how people responded to these two opposite views; which do you agree with – Dr. Stephen Hawking or the child? Surprisingly, people supported that boy’s experience on heaven far more than the famous scientist’s words.

One man whose knowledge was wasted to prove the absence of heaven, misusing the name of God, whereas a boy’s candid experience inspired people to have beliefs that heaven exists and God is alive.

I was reminded of Jesus’ words: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me” (Matt. 18:3-5).

How often do you and I wrongfully use the name of God in our daily lives? How often do we see others or politicians misuse the name of God? The tradition of swearing an oath on

a Bible – in court or elsewhere or concluding an oath with the words “*So help me God,*” reflects on this commandment’s impact.

A new catechism produced by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) reads:

Q) What do you learn from the third commandment?

A) I should use God’s name with reverence and awe. God’s name is taken in vain when used to support wrong. It is insulted when used carelessly, as in a curse or pious cliché.

A teacher began her lesson with a question, “Boys and girls, what do we know about God?” a hand shot up in the air. “He is an artist!” said the kindergarten boy. “Really?” How do you know?” the teacher asked. “You know – Our Father, who *does* art in Heaven...”

“Language is the light of the mind.” What words people use reflect who he or she is. We always have a choice to select the right words and wrong words. When we reverently use God’s name it is an expression of who we are as Christians and how we believe in God. We easily can see some people misusing God’s name for the sake of his or her own selfish purpose; some persons misuse God’s name to justify what he or she has done wrong. Some persons put God into his or her own box and use God’s name whenever he or she needs to.

We speak of God as an instrument of punishment – “God damn it or God punishes our enemy,” we say – or a source of blessing – “God bless you.” When what we are really doing is simply describing our own feelings and calling on God – in vain – to confirm our limited human views.

When we call on the name of God, we show to God our honor, respect, and glory; God is who he is. We have to be careful not to use the name of God inappropriately.

The PROPER way to use God’s name is the right way to worship God:

1. Praise and worship His name (“Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” Phil 2:9-11)
2. Reverence His name (“Father, hallowed be your name...” Luke 11:2)
3. Declare His name (“baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son...Matt 28:19-20)
4. Defend His name (1 Sam. 17:26)

God’s name is a powerful tool if it used properly. It is a tool for victory. David said as he approached Goliath, “You come against me with sword and spear, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty” (1 Samuel 17:45). God’s name is a tool for healing. As Peter approached the temple, he saw a beggar sitting there. Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk” (Acts 3:6). And God’s name is a tool of salvation: “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13).

Jesus always tried to give glory to God throughout his life and ministry. “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father” (John 14:13).

**Shall we bring glory to our Heavenly Father through the proper use of the name of God?
Let it be so Amen.**

Sermon Note:

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Dr. Stephen Hawking vs. Heaven is for real

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**God’s name has a power for victory.
God’s name has a power for healing.
God’s name has a power for salvation.**