

“Handle With Care” (Exodus 20:7)

Two thousand years ago, a man ran up to Jesus. He fell down at His feet and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.” Jesus then walked him through several commandments. The young man responded, “Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up.”

Well, unfortunately, Jesus had to break it to the rich young ruler that there’s more to this commandment than meets the eye.¹

Today, we’re going to look at the Third Commandment. Exodus 20:7 says: **“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.”**² Like the rich young ruler, many of us assume that we’ve kept this commandment from our youth. But the grim reality is: There’s more to the Third Commandment than meets the eye.

This commandment is unique. It’s one of only two of the Ten Commandments that warns of divine punishment for disobedience.³ That alone should get our attention.

So, here’s the question I want us to consider: *Why is misusing the LORD’s name so dangerous?* To answer that, we’ll examine this text in two parts: the command (20:7a) and the consequence (20:7b).

1. The Command: Don’t misuse God’s name (20:7a). Look at the opening words: **“You⁴ shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain⁵ . . .”** Notice how emphatic the command is: “You shall *not*.”⁶ This isn’t a suggestion or a recommendation. It’s a command from God.

If you grew up in church, you probably heard this commandment explained in one primary way: “don’t swear, don’t say ‘oh my God,’ or even ‘OMG.’” Now sure, that’s part of it. But if that’s all we seek to apply, we aren’t just missing the boat; we’re not even seeing the boat.⁷

So, what exactly does it mean to “take” God’s name in vain? The language here is important. Start with the word **“take.”** It doesn’t just mean “to say.” It means to lift up, to bear, to carry. In the OT, it’s the same word used for a servant lifting a heavy weight, or a priest carrying a sacred offering. This verb isn’t primarily about a slip of the tongue. It’s about what you’re carrying.

Now the word **“name.”** In our culture, names are mostly just sounds we like. You probably didn’t know that the name “Keith” is Gaelic and means “especially handsome.” Okay, I wish it did. Keith is actually a Scottish name meaning “wood” or “forest.” The typical interpretation is: “keeper of the forest.” Who knew? My parents certainly didn’t. They didn’t name me Keith because they envisioned me wandering through the woods protecting the trees. They just liked the name. And, as you can probably guess, I’m not much of a keeper of the forest. I’m more of a keeper of the library.

But in Scripture, names aren’t usually just nice sounds. They’re loaded with meaning. A name often revealed something about someone’s character or calling.⁸ This is *especially* true of God. The LORD’s name, *Yahweh*,⁹ appears nearly 400 times in Exodus and almost 7,000 times throughout the OT.¹⁰ *Yahweh* represents who He is¹¹ and what He’s revealed about Himself: His character and nature,¹² His truth,¹³ and His redemptive work.¹⁴

So, when God says, “Don’t take My name in vain,” He’s primarily talking about *representation*—carrying His *character* into a watching world.¹⁵ We are the LORD’s spokespersons, ambassadors,¹⁶ and representatives. We’re repin’ His reputation throughout the world.

WNBA superstar, Caitlin Clark, has her name stitched on the back of her Indiana Fever jersey. But it's the team's name that's stitched across the front—bigger and more prominent. Every time Caitlin takes the court, she's carrying a name that isn't hers. Now imagine she were to get arrested this week. The Fever did nothing wrong. But the headline won't just say "Caitlin Clark Arrested." It will say "Indiana Fever's Caitlin Clark Arrested." Her action drags the team's name right into the story. That's what happens when you wear someone else's name: your actions become their reputation.

That's the story behind the Third Commandment. In Exod 9:16, the LORD gave Israel His name to wear before the nations.¹⁷ They stepped into the world wearing *Yahweh's* jersey. Today, we carry that same responsibility. That's why *Yahweh's* name matters so much. To bear God's name is to represent God.¹⁸

But the question is: *How do we actually take God's name in vain?*

The word translated "vain" means empty, thoughtless,¹⁹ or worthless,²⁰ and it's often associated with evil or troublemaking intentions.²¹ While this term *can* include speech, it means so much more than simply misusing God's name in our words.

So, how do we carry God's name thoughtlessly? Before we get too specific, it's important to recognize that there are at least 23 distinct interpretations of the Third Commandment.²² However, we're not discussing all 23 today. You're welcome! But it's a good reminder to hold our conclusions with humility.

Let's look at four ways we dishonor God's name. We'll start with the most familiar. ***We dishonor God's name by careless speech.*** Something goes wrong, something breaks, or something frustrates us, and suddenly we invoke the name of the Creator as though His name were merely an expression of extreme anger or surprise. Or we flippantly refer to God as "The Man Upstairs" or "The Big Guy in the Sky." This communicates a lack of respect for God.²³ This is using the LORD's name in vain.

Think about how seriously we take names and titles in other areas of life. We defend the honor of our spouse. We respect the authority of a military officer. If you have the initials M.D. after your name, it means something. If you're the "President" or "CEO," it means something. Names and titles matter. Yet we can become remarkably casual with God's name. We say, "God!" "Oh, my God!" "Jesus Christ!" "Good Lord!" And we don't even notice we're doing it.²⁴

It's easy to think of that as mindless. Yet, think about it. When someone is shocked and angry, you'll never hear them curse using the devil's name. Nobody says "Oh, Satan!" And even in pluralistic Western Washington, nobody says, "Oh my Buddha!" "Good Vishnu!" or "Good Allah!" People always abuse the names of God and Jesus Christ. Why? Because there's NO other name under heaven by which we must be saved.²⁵ And deep down, everyone recognizes that there's NO higher power by which we can swear.²⁶ This demonstrates our rebellion to God's authority. Jesus Christ and the Lord God Almighty are the supreme authority—the name above all names. And when we, the creatures, use the Creator's name as an expletive, we "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom 1:18).

So, that's all true. But here's where we need to be careful. If we reduce the Third Commandment to just profanity, we actually reduce it to the easiest commandment to keep.²⁷ Just don't say certain words. Done. But that's not enough. The Third Commandment goes much deeper.

A second way we dishonor God's name is by misrepresenting His will.²⁸ A particularly serious way to break the Third Commandment is to use God's name to validate our own agendas. How often do believers say, "The Lord told me to do this." Or worse, "The Lord told me to tell YOU . . ."²⁹ Those statements sound spiritual, but if God hasn't said them, we've attached God's name to our own plans.³⁰ We've put words in God's mouth and used His authority to support our own desires.

A teenager might say, “God told me you’re supposed to buy me a car.” A friend might say, “God told me you should marry this person.” A pastor might say, “God told me our church needs to build this building.” In each case, the danger is the same: we must never attribute God’s name to our personal plans or desires.³¹ That’s why I often qualify my own advice by saying, “This is what I think; I’m not sure whether this is God’s will.”³² The aim of the Third Commandment isn’t just in forbidding *profanity*; it’s also aimed at forbidding *vanity*. God’s name must never be used to endorse our opinions.

A third way we dishonor God’s name is by broken vows and false promises. When we say, “I swear to God” or “As God is my witness,” we include God in the promise. So, when we break our promise, God is complicit in our deceit.³³ We’re attaching God’s *perfect* reputation to our puny promise.

This applies not only to spoken oaths but also to promises made before God. What are some ways we do this? We go before the church family and dedicate our children to the Lord and then spend every Sunday watching our kids play soccer. Ouch! We vow “in sickness and in health till’ death do us part,” and then we file for divorce for “irreconcilable differences.” Or you’re baptized on Sunday and then on Monday morning you call in sick to go fishing.³⁴ In each of these situations, you’ve attached God’s name to a promise and then failed to keep the vow.³⁵

Jesus addressed this level of integrity in Matt 5:37: “Let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil.” In other words, our word should be enough. We don’t need to strengthen our promises by invoking God’s name. We certainly don’t want to say, “I promise to God,” and then fail to follow through. God keeps His promises perfectly; we don’t. It’s better to say, “I’ll do my best,” or “I’ll try my hardest,” and then faithfully do what we said we would do.

A fourth way we dishonor God’s name is by hypocrisy and empty worship. We may take God’s name in vain not only with our *lips*, but with our *lives*. In Gen 4:26, true worship is described as “calling on the name of the LORD.” But what happens when we call on His name with our lips while our hearts are somewhere else? We pray over meals without a thought in our heads.³⁶ We open Scripture while thinking about something else.³⁷ We flippantly say, “Praise God,” while harboring secret sins.³⁸ We wear the Christian T-shirt, post Christian verses online, and use Christian vocabulary. But then we treat people badly and the watching world looks at us and thinks, “That’s what Christianity is?” Our lives have attached God’s name to behavior that doesn’t reflect His character.

This is why I don’t have any Christian bumper stickers on my car. If my driving doesn’t 100% reflect God’s character 100% of the time, then I’m guilty of hypocrisy and I give God’s name a black eye. I don’t know if the Lord wants His name associated with my driving! Many Christians drive like the devil and I’m certain God doesn’t want to be their co-pilot!

The same principle applies to our worship. The word *worship* comes from the Old English *worth-ship*, carrying the idea of declaring someone’s worth. To worship God is to declare He is worthy. So, when we sing worship songs without thinking about the words, scroll on our phones throughout the service, or pay more attention to people, our worship can become careless and superficial. Our lack of attention, reverence, and enthusiasm can misrepresent God’s name. When our worship is distracted or insincere, we fail to communicate the worth of the One we claim to worship.³⁹ When we gather to worship, our worship should give people a sense of God’s greatness.⁴⁰

That’s the weight of the Third Commandment. We aren’t merely representing ourselves. We’re carrying a name. And everything we say, everything we do, communicates something about God.

[The Third Commandment forces us to consider not merely whether we’re dishonoring God’s name, but whether we’re representing God’s name well.]

2. The Consequence: God takes the misuse of His name personally (20:7b). Now let's look at the second half of the commandment: “. . . for the LORD will not leave him unpunished⁴¹ who takes His name in vain.” That's a sobering statement. God takes His name seriously, and He warns us that those who misuse His name will not escape His judgment. Now, notice the text isn't explicit on what that judgment will look like. The point is this: there will be “payday, someday.”⁴²

Throughout Scripture, whenever people attempt to exploit God's name for their own purposes or treat it with contempt, God vindicates His honor. Why? Because God's name represents God Himself. To dishonor God's name is to dishonor Him.

A vivid example occurs in Acts 19.⁴³ Paul was preaching in Ephesus, and God was performing extraordinary miracles through him. Paul did *everything* in the name of Jesus— teaching, baptizing, and healing.

Seven sons of a Jewish chief priest named Sceva saw this and decided to try it themselves. They treated the name of Jesus like a magical incantation for personal gain. They went up to a demon-possessed man and said: “**I order you in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches!**”

Look at the demon's response in Acts 19:15: “**I recognize Jesus, and I know of Paul, but who are you?**” Boom. The man possessed by the evil spirit attacked them, overpowered all seven of them, and sent them running out of the house naked and wounded! Seven guys. One demon. Not a good day for the sons of Sceva. They tried to take the Name without knowing the Person.

Verse 17 records: “**Fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.**” People confessed their practices and burned their occult magic books, worth fifty thousand pieces of silver. And the Word of the Lord was growing and prevailing mightily. Notice the connection: when God's name was treated with honored, His name was magnified, and His Word prevailed.

The same principle challenges us today. When we bear God's name while living in ways that dishonor Him, we damage the reputation of the One we represent. God doesn't revoke our salvation, but He *does* discipline those who bear His name and live contrary to it. He will not endorse or bless sinful hypocrisy simply because we claim His name.

So, the question isn't merely, “Am I saved?” The question is, “What am I communicating about the God whose name I bear?” Because there's power in the name of Jesus. And our calling is to live in such a way that His name is magnified, not diminished, through us.

But How Should We Use God's Name?

If you want to guard your heart and bear His name with integrity, commit to three daily practices: ***First, acknowledge the weight of God's name.*** Every morning, imagine you're wearing a jersey that says, *Yahweh*. Live in a way that makes the gospel believable to those around you. Make sure your actions match what team they see you're on. Ask yourself: What am I attaching God's name to? What am I attaching His name to at home? At work? Online? In my marriage? In my business dealings? In my political conversations? In my worship? In my speech?

Second, guard your lips. Be careful with “God told me . . .” or “The Bible says . . .” Make sure God actually said what you're claiming He said. Don't borrow God's authority to strengthen your own opinion. Don't put God's name on your agenda. Don't make God your endorsement. If God didn't say it, don't say that He did. Ask the Holy Spirit to make you immediately aware of idle words, casual expletives, or flippant phrases.⁴⁴ Let your speech be seasoned with grace and marked by absolute honesty.

Finally, fill your mind with God's worth. You cannot stop trivializing God's name simply by trying harder. You must replace empty thoughts with a deep sense of His holiness. Pray through the Psalms. I do this daily, and it feeds my soul. Pray as Jesus taught us: "Hallowed be Your name." To hallow God's name means to regard it as holy, to set it apart, and to give it the honor it deserves.

As Paul wrote in Col 3:17: "Whatever you do in word or deed, **do all in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." Notice how comprehensive that is: whatever you do. Not just what you say. Not just what happens in church. Not just your prayers. Whatever you do. In word. In deed. Do it in the name of Jesus. In other words, live as someone who bears His name.

The Gospel: Jesus Bore the Name Perfectly

If the Third Commandment tells us to represent God's name faithfully, then every one of us has failed. We've spoken carelessly. We've made promises we haven't kept. We've attached God's name to our opinions. We've worshiped distractedly. We've called ourselves Christians while living inconsistently. We've *all* fallen short.⁴⁵

But Jesus didn't. He came as the One who perfectly represented the Father. He never misrepresented God. He never lied in God's name. He never used God's authority for His own ends. In every word, thought, and deed, He honored the Father's name. On the night before He was crucified, He prayed, "I have made Your name known to the people whom You gave Me out of the world" (John 17:6). We carried God's name badly. Jesus carried it flawlessly.

And yet the One who perfectly honored God's name was condemned as though He had dishonored it. The high priest tore his robes and cried, "He has blasphemed!" (Matt 26:65). Jesus was mocked, rejected, and crucified for the very sin He never committed. Why? So that people who have dishonored God's name could be forgiven. That's the gospel. Jesus fulfilled the Law we've broken.⁴⁶ He bore our sin. He died in our place. And He rose again. If you haven't trusted in Jesus Christ, do so today.

If you're a believer carrying guilt over how you've handled God's name, hear this: the name you've misused and abused is the very name that you've called on for salvation (Rom 10:13).

Right now, Lori and I are in the process of moving into a new home. We have boxes everywhere. We've become moving experts. Some of our special boxes are labeled: HANDLE WITH CARE. That's a helpful picture for the Third Commandment. God's name is infinitely powerful, but we've been entrusted with it. This sermon has one essential truth: *Handle with care: It's not your name.*

God's name matters because He matters. His name is the name above every name. So, *handle with care: It's not your name.*

Scripture References

Leviticus 11:44; 19:2, 12; 24:10–16

Psalms 24:4; 34:3; 69:30

Proverbs 30:7–9

Isaiah 45:5–6, 23–24

Matthew 5:34–37

John 14:15, 21, 23

Philippians 2:9–11

Notes

⁴⁴ See Matt 12:36–37.

⁴¹ Alec Motyer, *The Message of Exodus: The Days of Our Pilgrimage*, The Bible Speaks Today (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), 225 n. 25: “The word is *nāqā*, which in the niphal means ‘to be free, exempt’, i.e. ‘to be guiltless, innocent, unpunished’ (e.g. Gen. 24:8; 1 Sam. 26:9; Prov. 6:29). In the piel (as here) it means ‘to acquit, leave unpunished’ (e.g. Exod. 34:7; 1 Kgs 2:9).”

³¹ Deuteronomy 18:20–22 takes false prophecy very seriously because the prophet claims to speak in God’s name. The principle extends beyond prophecy to our teaching, advice, opinions, and even our social media posts.

¹ See Mark 10:17–20.

² Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1983), 87, “If the first commandment dealt with the object of our worship, and the second the means of our worship, the third commandment deals with our verbal worship of God.” Note: But we’ll discover the Third Commandment involves much more than our verbal worship.

³ In the Second Commandment (Exod 20:4–6), God says He visits the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Him, while showing steadfast love to thousands who love Him.

⁴ The third-person speech relative to its reference to *Yahweh* is a pattern that continues throughout the remaining commandments. See Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 454.

⁵ Other versions render this phrase “misuse” (CSB, NIV, NLT).

⁶ *Lo* (“not”) is the first word in Hebrew giving the negative statement great force.

⁷ To understand any biblical passage, we must ask: what did the author intend for his original audience to understand? The Third Commandment was given to Israel at Mount Sinai—a specific people, at a specific time, with a specific calling. We cannot understand and apply it accurately today until we grasp what it meant to them. See Michael C. Patton, “Taking the Lord’s Name in Vain—What Does It Really Mean?” *CredoHouse (blog)*. August 15, 2014. <https://credohouse.org/blog/taking-the-lords-name-in-vain>. See also David A. Croteau and Gary Yates, *Urban Legends of the Old Testament: 40 Misconceptions* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019), 37–42.

⁸ Stuart, *Exodus*, 456, “In any culture, modern or ancient, a name is a verbal symbol for a person or thing, and the ancients in particular obviously appreciated the way names connoted the very value, character, and influence of a person or thing.” John L. Mackay, *Exodus*, Mentor Commentaries (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2001), 348, specifically mentions “his power, his love, and his justice.”

⁹ Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2016), 43, “Israel’s identification with Yahweh and vice versa is what makes this command so relevant. He was their God; they were his people (6:6–7). His name, the Tetragrammaton (literally “four letters”; יהוה), was considered holy—so holy that in Israel’s later history its utterance was avoided.”

¹⁰ *Elohim* occurs 2600 times. John I. Durham, *Exodus*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1987), 287. John D. Currid, *Exodus 19–40*, EP Study Commentary (Darlington, England; Carlisle, PA: Evangelical Press, 2001), 40, “Yahweh is the personal name that God himself revealed to his people. When someone insincerely or thoughtlessly invokes God’s name, that person is proclaiming that God’s being, nature, and essence are worthless.”

¹¹ Ajith Fernando, *Deuteronomy—Loving Obedience to a Loving God*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 176.

¹² See Ps 20:1; Lk 24:47; Jn 1:12; cf. Rev 3:4.

¹³ See Ps 22:22; Mic 4:5; Jn 17:6, 26. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., “Exodus,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Genesis–Leviticus, Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 481.

¹⁴ Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, *Exodus: Saved for God’s Glory* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 578.

¹⁵ Carpenter, *Exodus*, 43, “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 (19:5–6), they were to bear the name of their God to honor him.” E.g., John 14:13–14. John N. Oswalt, *Exodus*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 2008), 443, suggests that to bear God’s name means to possess His power of attorney in the world.

¹⁶ Think about what it meant, in the ancient world, to bear someone's name. A royal seal stamped on a letter meant the king himself stood behind those words. An ambassador who spoke "in the name of" his king wasn't just using a phrase—he was staking the king's honor on his own conduct. If the ambassador lied, cheated, or embarrassed himself in a foreign court, it wasn't just his reputation on the line. It was the king's.

¹⁷ On the significance of "bearing the name of YHWH" as representing God before the nations, see Carmen Joy Imes, *Bearing YHWH's Name at Sinai: A Reexamination of the Name Command of the Decalogue*, Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement 19 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2018); Carmen Joy Imes, *Bearing God's Name: Why Sinai Matters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019).

¹⁸ See the following suggestions: Daniel I. Block, *Deuteronomy*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 163, "You shall not bear/carry the name of Yahweh your God empty"; Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 73, (lit. "You shall not lift up the name of Yahweh your God to worthlessness").

¹⁹ The Septuagint translates *nāsā'* in the Third Commandment as "thoughtlessly."

²⁰ Cf. Ps 12:2; Prov 30:8; Isa 59:4. Currid, *Exodus 19–40*, 40. See also J. I. Packer, *Keeping the Ten Commandments* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 40.

²¹ See Ps 12:2; Prov 30:8; Isa 59:4.

²² See Imes, *Bearing YHWH's Name at Sinai*, 7–45.

²³ Christian T-shirts are another example. "Jesus Saves" is a soccer shirt with Jesus as the goalie. But Jesus isn't a cartoon soccer goalie; He's the Creator. Or the Bloodweiser T-shirt that associates the King of kings with the king of beers. The creators of these T-shirts unwittingly diminish the greatness of Jesus' name.

²⁴ In his book on the Ten Commandments, Rob Schenck tells how he confronted two men for breaking the third commandment: Some years ago, after a long speaking itinerary in the Midwest, I boarded a late-night flight to return home. I was tired and looking forward to a rest. Sitting behind me in the airplane were two salesmen whose conversation was peppered with profanity. I had finally had it when they began running the Lord's name into the gutter. I raised myself up from my seat and turned around so that I was looking down on them from my perch. Then I asked, "Are either of you in the ministry?" The one in the aisle seat raised his eyebrows incredulously and said, "What the ... would ever make you think that?" "Well, I am in the ministry," I said with a smile. "And I am amazed at your communication skills. You just said God, damn, hell, and Jesus Christ in one sentence. I can't get all of that into a whole sermon!" They both blushed, and I didn't hear another word from them for the remainder of the flight! See Rob Schenck, *The Ten Words That Will Change a Nation: The Ten Commandments* (Tulsa: Albury, 1999), 53–54. Quoted in Ryken and Hughes, *Exodus*, 585.

²⁵ See Acts 4:12.

²⁶ Ryken and Hughes, *Exodus*, 584–85.

²⁷ Patton, "Taking the Lord's Name in Vain."

²⁸ Anthony T. Selvaggio, *Bondage to Liberty: The Gospel according to Moses*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, The Gospel according to the Old Testament (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2014), 123–24, "God also forbade the vain use of his name by attaching it to a false prophecy (Deut. 18:22), a false oath (Lev. 19:12), or using it as a magical incantation (Deut. 18:10–12). God's name should not be trifled with, invoked carelessly, or profaned in any manner."

²⁹ T. Desmond Alexander, *Exodus*, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 102, "This commandment covers more than blasphemy or foul language. It prohibits any use of the divine name that would detract from how God is perceived. The Israelites must exercise extreme caution when talking about God or invoking his name, especially when using God's name to promote their own agenda."

³⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Exodus*, The Story of God Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2021), 364–65, "Prophets delivered their words in Yahweh's name. Those who did so illegitimately, not having received any word from the LORD, were subject to severe penalty (Deut 18:17–22) and reproach (Jer 23:9–40)—they were effectively using Yahweh's name for evil ends, including their own popularity."

³² Fernando, *Deuteronomy*, 182.

³³ Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster, 1974), 410, "This term [*nāsā'*] had a fairly technical meaning. It was used in legal situations to refer to the taking of an oath." See also Jay Sklar, "Exodus," in *Genesis–Numbers*, ESV Expository Commentary (Wheaton: Crossway, 2025), 609–10, "People also used the Lord's name as a means of swearing to tell the truth in court. Corrupting the legal process by lying would be a specific violation of this command as well (Lev. 19:12; Deut. 6:13; 10:20; see also Lev. 6:3–5)."

³⁴ See Deut 23:21–23; Ps 15:4; Eccl 5:4–5.

³⁵ Jesus also reminds us in Matt 12:36–37 that we’ll give an account for every careless word we speak. So, this isn’t something we can afford to ignore.

³⁶ Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 88. Selvaggio, *Bondage to Liberty*, 124, “We can even run the risk of treating his name like a magical incantation when we become flippant and superficial in our prayer lives. We’re called to revere the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

³⁷ Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 88.

³⁸ See Isa 1:10–17; 29:13; Jer 7:1–14. Ryken and Hughes, *Exodus*, 586–87.

³⁹ Fernando, *Deuteronomy*, 177. Three times in the OT, God’s people are commanded to “worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness” (1 Chron 16:29; Pss 29:2; 96:9).

⁴⁰ Fernando, *Deuteronomy*, 177.

⁴² Stuart, *Exodus*, 456, The punishment “could in theory take any form of God’s choosing, from something relatively minor to death.”

⁴³ Leviticus 24 records an incident in which a man publicly blasphemed the LORD’s name. God took the offense seriously and commanded the people to stone him. So, they took him outside the camp and stoned him. Now, the application for today is NOT that we should adopt Israel’s civil penalties under the Mosaic covenant. The point is when God says that anyone who misuses His name will be held responsible, we should take Him at His word! See also Ryken and Hughes, *Exodus*, 581.

⁴⁵ See Rom 3:23.

⁴⁶ See Matt 5:17.