

# Bearing The Name of YHWH

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Oh, God is so good. Amen. We thank God for His Word. We thank God for His everlasting Word that has not changed one bit in thousands of years. Yet every year, every decade, our culture changes. We thank God for His Word. We thank God that He Himself is unchanging, His grace and faithfulness towards us is unchanging, His love and mercy is unchanging, God is so good. So, we open His Word this morning, Exodus chapter 20.

And this morning, we are looking at just one verse, verse 7. Amen.

Heavenly Father, as we open Your Word, please speak to us by Your Spirit. Illuminate Your Word in our hearts and glorify your name, we pray in Jesus' name.

Exodus 20 verse 7 says this, You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. Amen. Well, this is in the context of these ten words. This moment, Israel has arrived at the mountain of God. They've been prepared. They've been consecrated. They walk up to the mountain of God, and it is enshrined in smoke and fire, just as the bush was with Moses.

And this is a context into which this word is spoken. A covenant relationship is beginning. A covenant agreement is being made. It's a covenant. It's not just a commandment. It's not just ten rules. It's a covenant, as we spoke about last week. And one of the things that we've been noticing throughout Exodus, particularly in the plagues and all the time they spent in Egypt, was, although we know a lot about the gods of Egypt, although we know a lot about the pharaohs of Egypt, not one time are any of those named in the book of Exodus, not once. Pharaohs not named, the gods of Egypt are not named, because really there's only one name in Exodus that matters.

[ 2 : 5 8 ] And that is the name that is superior and sovereign over all of those. That is the name of Yahweh. There's no other name that rescued them out of Egypt. There's no other name that created the heavens and the earth. There's no other name that matters, particularly for Israel. There's no other name for them to take other than that of Yahweh. So it's no wonder we see a commandment relating to the name of Yahweh. The question is, why? Why is this commandment here? As we saw last week, the law wasn't given just as a way for Israel to be saved. Israel had already been rescued prior to the giving of the law. So the law wasn't given to save Israel. It wasn't given as a way to burden them, but it was actually given to protect them from the way of slavery and death. It was given to lead them in paths of righteousness leading to life. One of the things we looked at last week was that these 10 words given by God are particularly foundational to the covenant God made with Israel.

The question is, what have you most commonly heard? Most likely, I'm guessing, we've heard that it's about how we use the name. Don't use the name in vain. Certainly being one of the most common understandings of this command in the English-speaking world, don't use the name of God in a vain way.

Don't use God's name as a swear word. So common has this understanding been that it's even been applied to people saying the word God in a vain way, even though God is not his name but his title.

And because of this, we sometimes miss the intentional specificity in the Bible, because we read a strict monotheism into it. Because we hold that there is only one true God, and there is one creator, we sometimes miss that there might be these contexts with lesser gods that draw people's hearts away and draw people away to worship these lesser gods.

For example, when Psalm 23, everyone in this room, I'm guessing, has heard Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Now, we can often miss that David has been intentionally specific in what he's saying. He's not just saying, God is like a shepherd.

[ 5 : 40 ] He's saying, Yahweh, above all the other gods, Yahweh is my shepherd. And because Yahweh is my shepherd, I shall not have want. So he isn't just saying that God is like a shepherd. He's specifically saying that Yahweh is his shepherd, and as such, he has no want. And so we're so used to hearing, reading, Lord capitalized in the place of God's name that we often miss the punch of it. We often miss the importance of a name rather than just a title. There's something about a name, isn't there? So even if the command was about how we use the name of God, at least we know it's not talking about God, the title, in a vain way, because it's specifically about his name. And we hear this in our culture. How many times have you heard someone saying, OMG? But we need to remember this is not just about God as a title. It's about his name. And so we're probably less familiar with hearing the name of Yahweh being used. But we are familiar, however, in our culture with hearing the name of Jesus being used in vain and wrong ways. So we might not hear people using the name Yahweh, but we hear many people saying Jesus or Jesus Christ in wrong ways. However, again, is this what this command is about?

Is this command simply about how we say his name? Actually, there's another understanding about a more traditional form of swearing, swearing an oath, the view that this command was not to use the name of Yahweh to swear an oath in vain. Do not say things like, as surely as Yahweh lives, and so on. And then when it doesn't come true, because you then made out that the living God is neither living nor God, using it in a vain way. However, again, is that what this command is about?

What is it about the name of Yahweh that this nation need to be clear on at this point? What is it about this context, this moment of entering into a covenant relationship?

What is it that is foundational in this command that will be later unpacked? You see, many other places in the law, commands will be specific about how God's name is specifically used.

But at this point, in this particular context, what is fundamentally important about the name of the God who rescued them out of Egypt? Is it simply that we shouldn't say the name of God in a wrong way? Is it merely that we should not make oaths? Is it about us just, as long as you control the way that you speak, you'll be all right? Is that what it's about? Do any of those make sense in the context and position of this command at this point of a covenant agreement being made?

[ 8 : 39 ] Clearly, it's about the importance of a name. And so, let me illustrate. On Wednesday night, and I hope you don't mind me saying this, Gene. On Wednesday night, Gene was looking for something. I don't know if you've found it yet.

Yes, you've found it. I'm so grateful. Gene was looking for something. But I noticed that she kept saying the wrong thing. It was because her mind was elsewhere. She kept saying the wrong thing.

She was looking for an iron, but she kept calling it one of those things that you use to clean the carpet. What are those things called? What? Okay. Hoover. I'm glad. That was the carrot. You know, you fell for it. That's my game. Hoover. And so, this got me thinking, right? A person's name. So, Hoover is a person's name. William Henry Hoover. A person's name has become synonymous with the action of his product. William Henry Hoover dominated the market to the point that his name became a verb.

to Hoover. Ironically, you've seen those little red vacuum cleaners. And what's the name on the little red vacuum cleaners? Henry, which is William Henry Hoover. And then the person who made those little red ones, people started calling them Henry Hoovers, and he really didn't like that.

But it is what it is. Hoover has become synonymous. Names matter. Names convey something. So, let me ask this. Why did the owner's surname, Hoover, become so synonymous with vacuum cleaners?

[10:16] What happened? Well, I'll tell you. It was because his name was on every single vacuum cleaner. His name was branded onto the vacuum cleaners, and that conveyed ownership, identity, and quality.

It was because his name was on the product. Names matter. Branding matters. What if this command was more about branding than it was about how we use the name of God? And so, let me take you a bit further, right? It's not just an idea. In the Hebrew, look at the verse, right? Look at this verse.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. So, what do we generally use the word take for? If I was to say to Murray, can you take your drums? But don't take them in vain. What would that be meaning?

You know, can you take your car? Can you take this? What would it mean? And so, take's not a bad translation. The word, the Hebrew word that's translated to take is actually the Hebrew word nasa.

And it's really easy to remember because it means to lift up. Nasa. Nasa. Rocket. Hebrew word nasa, to lift up. And so, the Hebrew word actually has nothing to do with speech.

[11:50] That's the first clue that this command isn't necessarily about how we say God's name. It means to lift up, to carry, to bear, to take. So, it's not actually anything to do with speech, but it's about lifting or carrying. And this is where Old Testament scholars, I've found Old Testament scholars like Dr. Carmen Imes and the late Dr. Michael Heiser very, very helpful on this command and the Old Testament. So, in Exodus 25, just a few chapters later, they talk about all the things in the temple and the things that they've to make, the Ark of the Covenant. It's not the temple, it's the tabernacle, but they talk about the Ark of the Covenant. And what do they need to put in it to lift it?

Because they're not allowed to touch it. So, what do they put in it to lift it? They put these poles in it. And it uses this word nasa about these poles. Use these poles to take the Ark of the Covenant, to lift it up. Now, if the Hebrew has nothing to do with speech, why is this command often being taught as though it's about speech?

Well, perhaps it's because what does it mean to take someone's name? What does that even mean? Some people have thought that it means to lift up your hand and taking an oath in that name.

Other people have thought that it means to carry the name on your lips. What does it mean to carry a name? Well, last week we looked at two illustrations, the illustration of marriage, a husband and wife, and the illustration of a parent and child. And we must keep in focus that the context is a covenant ceremony. When they come to the mountain, it's like, dearly, dearly beloved, we're gathered here in this ceremony for holy matrimony.

It's a covenant ceremony. So, if we think about last week, we looked at the relation to having no other gods because Yahweh rescued them out of Egypt. And we saw the illustration of, it's like a husband saying to a wife, have no other husbands. Similarly, it was like a child who had been adopted and the dad saying, have no other dads. We can use the same illustration in these two relationships to see how a person can take a name. So, if you've ever been married or know someone that's been married or have you ever been at a wedding, you know this. And so, like, Danny, did you take someone's name? Yes. I do. No. You did. You did. No longer your name. Jennifer has taken my name.

[ 14 : 36 ] So, we know this in marriage ceremonies. You take someone's name. Does that mean you go about just saying the name? No, it's not. You don't go around just saying the name. There's something about taking someone's name. It's the same in a family. A child takes the name of the parent. And sometimes, when a child is adopted, they take on the family name. They become identified as part of that family.

And so, this command is not to take the name of Yahweh in vain. Think again of this like a marriage covenant. What does the wife do in part of the marriage? She takes the husband's name, doesn't she?

And what does that name convey? It conveys that she belongs to someone. She belongs to someone now. She's a taken woman. So, when Israel take the name of Yahweh, they're a taken nation. They have a God.

What would it be for her, for a woman to take the name of a man in vain? What does that mean? Would it mean that she goes around cursing the name? Or would it be rather that she lives as though she's not married? Would that be taking the name in vain? Like a wife who's taking on a husband's name, and then she goes out and lives as though she's not married, and she goes off with other men. It's like the example of Hosea, isn't it? Similarly, a child takes the name of their parent. Often, this is the case as well in adopted children. We all know that a person's actions can either glorify or disgrace a family name. You ever seen that? That a name has been either glorified or disgraced, depending on what someone does with that. And so, we can see examples of how we can take a name, we can carry a name, and in doing so, we represent that name. And how we act, how we live, that will do something to that name. You'll either do good to it or you'll do bad to it. Now, let me go further. Priestly clothing, right, just a few chapters later, in Exodus 28, we see this very thing happening. We see the Hebrew wording of this command. When Moses is told about the design of the priestly outfits, we get an insight into what this command might mean, because it's the exact same wording, to take the name of something, to bear the name before something. And so, this command about the priestly clothing in Exodus 28, you should read it. It's fantastic. It was to have an onyx stone on each shoulder, and on each onyx stone, he was to engrave the twelve names of the sons of Israel, six on each shoulder. And so, he was to take the names of the sons of Israel before the Lord in the tent of meeting. Similarly, he was given a breastplate, and on that breastplate, he was to have four rows of three stones. And on each stone was the name of one of the sons of Israel. And he was to take that name, he was to take that plate and bear the names of the sons of Israel, representing the twelve tribes, the whole nation. He was to bear their names, carry their names before Yahweh. And it says that, Exodus 28, 29, it says, bearing their names of the sons of Israel on his heart to bring them to regular remembrance before

Yahweh. So, when we are thinking about what it means to take or carry or bear the name of Yahweh, not only do we see the Hebrew word isn't necessarily talking about speech, but we see from the same book, the same phrase about the priests taking or carrying or bearing the names of the nation before Yahweh.

[ 18 : 22 ] And so, David said this a few weeks ago, I remember, I think it was a Wednesday night Bible study, that when we come to a part of the Bible we're not particularly clear on, if we keep reading, often the Bible will shed light on the things that we don't understand if we keep reading.

So, I hope this helps. The more you read in Exodus, the more you see these similar phrases and words being used. There's a specific command elsewhere about taking oaths and speaking the name of God, but at this point, taking the name, bearing the name, is about representing someone before someone else. Who you belong to matters. Whose name you take matters. And I remember hearing Pastor Louis Giglio talking about carrying the name and listing off many different brand names that we carry every single day. I wonder if you're wearing something today that has a name on it. You're wearing something that has a brand name on it, and you're carrying the name. I remember Louis Giglio saying that all of these brand names, all of these companies have one thing in common. It's that they need you to carry their name. And if you don't carry their name, they will go broke. That's what he said. Why? Because you don't just carry their name.

For your sake, you carry it for someone else. And so, that's why they get athletes and celebrities to wear their products and adverts so that other people associate it with quality, with value, with goodness, and so on. And they want it. So, what does it mean to carry the name of Yahweh, your God?

What does it mean to not do that in vain? Well, remember at this point, specifically for Israel, they have just been rescued by Yahweh out of Egypt. Remember, in the previous chapter, they were called a kingdom of priests. They belong to Yahweh now. They represent Yahweh. He is their God, and they are His people. And that's the formula of the covenant. You'll see this later on in the Bible.

That's the formula of the covenant. I will be your God, and you will be my people. So, if you think about last week, last week was about Yahweh as the one God for Israel. I will be your God. And this week is about you will be my people, so represent me, carry me. Don't do that in vain. I will be your God, so have no other gods. Verse 7, you will be my people, so don't take my name in vain. Don't misrepresent me before the nations. Don't act like you are not my people. Don't act like you've not been rescued. He's their God, and they are His people. Does that make sense? And so we see this in that famous psalm that we spoke about earlier, Psalm 23. Yahweh is my shepherd, so I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, and He leads me beside still waters. Verse 3, He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness. Why? For His name's sake. Do you see that? It's not He helps me to speak properly for His name's sake. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. See how paths of righteousness are for the sake of God's name? In this covenant relationship, it's both what God does and what the people do. If the people don't live like they are rescued and redeemed, if they don't live like they're a treasured possession in a kingdom of priests, what's that going to say to the world about Yahweh? And likewise, if God doesn't keep His promises, what's that going to say about Yahweh? And this happens when Israel mess it up big time with the golden calf. Later on in

[ 22 : 05 ] Exodus, Moses has to stand before God and intercede for the people, and he says, consider God, consider that these are your people. How shall it be known that I found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us? He's saying, don't abandon us. Go with us.

Again, in Numbers 14, the nation rebels against Yahweh, and Moses has to intercede. And it's interesting what he says. He says, if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say this, it's because Yahweh was not able to bring this people into the land that He swore to them that He killed them in the wilderness. See how that correlates? If the nation were killed in the wilderness, that would be terribly misrepresent God and His promises.

And the nations who have already heard about the fame of Yahweh in defeating Egypt would begin to say, ah, God wasn't able. God, that Yahweh God, He's not able to do what He says.

And so Moses says, for your namesake, God, this is your people. Finally, another thing from the Torah that we'll be very familiar with is the Aaronic blessing.

You know the Aaronic blessing? The Lord keep you. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Yahweh bless you and keep you. And then the very next verse, we probably are not as familiar with this. The very next verse, God says, and so shall they, that is the priests who bless the people, so shall they put my name upon them, upon the people of Israel and bless them. So it's like a branding ceremony. When Aaron and the priests bless the nation, they are branding them with Yahweh's name to carry it into the world. Don't bear the name of Yahweh in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless, guiltless, who bears his name in vain. But here's the thing. We know it didn't work.

[ 24 : 28 ] Why did they not represent God's name well before the nations? Why did they not keep this law? In Ezekiel 36, it says that Israel profaned the name of Yahweh, not by simply saying it the wrong way, but by their wayward ways and idolatry. They profaned the name of Yahweh before the nations.

They gave Yahweh a really bad name. Now, I remember growing up, there was a particular car that had a bad name. Anyone want to guess what car that is? Well, that as well, but that was a wee bit before. But there was one who had worked very hard over the years to try and redeem that name. Skoda. Skoda. For how long did Skoda have a bad name? You know, people just said, don't get a Skoda. They're unreliable.

This Yahweh God, is he reliable or not? And the nation of Israel profaned his name and made God out to be like a Skoda. And this is what God said in Ezekiel 36, right? They've profaned my name. They have profaned my name. But he says this, he says, it is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I'm about to act, but it's for the sake of my holy name, which you've profaned among the nations. And the nations will know that I am Yahweh, declares Yahweh God. When through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes, how's he going to do that? How is God going to redeem his holy name when Israel have so profaned it? Well, folks, this is what we call the new covenant.

He says, because I will give you a new heart. See, what the people need is not a new law. They don't need a new God. They need a new heart. I will give you a new heart. I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes. And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God, and I will deliver you from all your uncleanness. That's the new covenant. This is what Jesus came to fulfill. It is through Jesus that we can have a new heart. It's through Jesus that we can have the Spirit of God. It is through Jesus that God can be with us, and it's through Jesus that we can walk in His ways. Not because by doing so we'll be saved because we represent His name, the name of the one and the only one who could ever save us in the first place. And that's what the covenant started with. I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. Therefore, do not bear my name in vain. And so think about that with Jesus.

Does this not make more sense of Jesus' priestly prayer in John 17? Because in John 17, He talks an awful lot about making God's name known, keeping us in God's name. Not that the disciples needed to learn the name of Yahweh. They knew it. But what Moses spoke about God going with them, God's presence, so too Jesus made God's name known by perfectly bearing His name before the people, perfectly representing God, and perfectly being present as God with them. So what is it? When you see just how concerned God's name is to God, what does it say about this man Jesus? When God is so concerned about His name above all other names in the Old Testament, what is it about Jesus? When Jesus is given the name that is above every other name? When Jesus is given the name that every knee will bow to from every sphere, sky, land, and sea, and every tongue would confess that Jesus Christ is who? The Lord. And who is the Lord but Yahweh? That everyone would confess that Jesus Christ is Yahweh to the glory of God the Father.

[ 28 : 44 ] It's not a different God. It is Yahweh come in human form. And so what is it we are carrying into the world? Are you a Christian? Do you hold that name Christian? Do you bear the name of Christian?

What do we bear? If we could see that it doesn't matter as much where we are, sometimes we're too concerned about what do I do God. What is your will for my life? What should I do? Where should I go?

What if it was less about that and more about what we carry wherever we go? What do we carry? What are the things that we are currently carrying that we don't need?

What things are we bearing and carrying that might misrepresent God? Are we carrying things like anger? Are we carrying things like a grudge? Are we carrying unforgiveness in our hearts?

Are we carrying the name of Jesus? This is what Jesus said in Acts 9 about Paul. He said that he chose Paul to carry his name before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel to carry the name of Jesus. Now how do we do that?

[ 29 : 59 ] Isn't that what Paul says in Colossians chapter 3? Paul says this, whatever you do. He doesn't say you need to find out specifically what you must do.

He says whatever you do. Whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. Now does that mean that every single thing we do we say in the name of the Lord Jesus?

In the name of the Lord Jesus? Or is it more about carrying the name of Jesus in everything that we do? Representing Jesus in everything we do. Acting in such a way when people say, why are you doing that?

And you say, because Jesus. Jesus did that for us. It's like Peter says in his letter, be ready to give a reason for the hope that is within you.

And it implies that somebody is going to ask you one day, why are you so hopeful in such a dreadful situation? And you're going to say, it's because of Jesus.

[ 30 : 59 ] And later on, Peter says, when you suffer for the name of Christ, when you suffer for being a Christian, how do you respond?

Because you carry that name. You carry that name. Because it's not our name, folks. It's not our name that's going to free people from darkness. It's not our name that's going to give people forgiveness of their sins.

It's not our union as a group of churches. It's not our denomination. It's not the fact that we're evangelical. It's not that we're reformed. It's not Bells Hill Baptist Church that people are looking for.

It's not Cal or even Calvin. It's not me. It's not you. The world isn't looking for any of these things. But the world needs the name that is above every other name. The world needs the name of Jesus because there is no other name given under heaven by which men must be saved.

There's no other name. So why would we carry any other name into the world? There's no other name. And if you know Him, if you know Jesus, if you carry His name, if you love Him, if He has freed you from darkness and forgiven your sins, then know this, that you belong to Him.

[ 32 : 16 ] Nothing He promised regarding you will fail because you belong to Him. That you carry His name as representative of the fact that you belong to Him.

And if you belong to Him, nobody's going to snatch you out of His hands. He is your God, and you are His people. He is bearing your name before the Father in heaven.

And so let us bear His name before the world. Amen. Let us sing together.