

Exodus 20:7-11
Commandments 3 & 4: Reverence and Rest

Last week, we looked at the first two of the Ten Commandments

- Don't have any other gods before Yahweh
- Don't make, worship, or serve idols or likenesses of Yahweh

The common denominator in these two was the theme of worship

- God was establishing worship of Him as being of the highest importance

These first two Commandments set the base, foundation, and expectation for the remaining 8

- In many ways, the remaining 8 flow from these first two

This morning, we will discuss the 3rd and 4th Commandments

- 3rd – not taking the name of the LORD in vain
- 4th – keeping the Sabbath

The first 4 Commandments deal with the vertical relationship

- Man's relationship with God

I think we have some preconceived notions of what the 3rd and 4th Commandments mean

- But some of what you learn today may challenge you

Let's read Exodus 20:7-11

These five verses will detail the 3rd and 4th Commandments that will be our focus this morning

I. Commandment 3: Reverence (20:7)

7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain."

After describing the essence of how Israel was to worship Yahweh, He then describes how Israel was to honor His name

There is a sudden change in how the remaining 8 Commandments are framed

- The first two Commandments were written in the 1st person
- The last eight Commandments are written in the 3rd person

There is a switch from "Me" to "the LORD your God"

- What are we to make of this?

Some have gone so far as to indicate that Israel only heard directly from God on the first two Commandments

- In other words, after the second commandment, Israel had had enough

They didn't want to hear from God directly

- They wanted to hear from Moses

The problem with this view is that this very statement is made by Israel in Exodus 20:19

- But that is after the Ten Commandments are finished

We have no reason to take verse 19 and somehow replace it after the 2nd Commandment

- That would run counter to the flow of Exodus 20

The change in person is probably just a stylistic difference

- God oftentimes speaks of Himself in the 3rd person¹

One author says that the change to the 3rd person is to call special attention to the covenant name, Yahweh²

Like the majority of the Ten Commandments, the 3rd Commandment begins with the Hebrew word לֹא³

- “No” or “never”

In other words, this isn’t merely a suggestion

- God is forbidding anyone from taking His name in vain

The first two Commandments deal with our worship of the LORD

- The fact that we are not to have any gods before Him
- The fact that we are not to worship or serve idols or likenesses

The 3rd Commandment deals with how we honor or dishonor God’s name

- The Name of the great God who we are called to serve

Let’s back up and investigate the significance of a name

- The Hebrew mindset of a name was far different from today’s mindset

To the Hebrew, a name meant something

- To them, a name was much more than just a combination of syllables
- It was more than just a label⁴

God’s name represents His character and reputation⁵

- His teaching

In a sense, God’s name is a summary of all that He is⁶

- His power
- His love
- His holiness
- Etc.

What did David say in Psalm 8:1?

- “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Thy name in all the earth, Who hast displayed Thy splendor above the heavens!”
- God’s name is great because He is great!

¹ Douglas K. Stuart, *NAC, Exodus*, 454 (footnote #37).

² Philip Graham Ryken, *Preaching the Word, Exodus*, 578.

³ John D. Currid, *An EP Study Commentary, Exodus, Vol 2*, 40.

⁴ Ryken, 578.

⁵ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Exodus*, 423.

⁶ John L. Mackay, *A Mentor Commentary, Exodus*, 348.

Why did God rescue Israel at the Red Sea?

- According to Psalm 106:8, “**He saved them for the sake of His name, that He might make His power known**”

The 3rd Commandment uses the word “**take**”

- It involves the use of our mouth in producing speech⁷
- It can refer to the taking of an oath⁸

What does it mean to take the name of the LORD your God “**in vain**”?

- “**vain**” implies that which is empty or trivial⁹

An obvious misuse of Yahweh’s Name is in taking oaths

- Leviticus 19:12 tells us, “**you shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD**”

Here we are warned specifically about swearing falsely

- If we do this, then we “**profane the name of your God**”

Jesus discussed the subject of oath-taking in the Sermon on the Mount¹⁰

- “**Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.’ But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; and anything beyond these is of evil.**” (Mt 5:33-37)

Was Jesus saying, “Don’t make any oaths at all”?

- I don’t think so

Jesus’ point is so simple

- Just speak the truth!
- Be a person of your word!

As James 5:12 says, “**do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but let your yes be yes, and your no, no; so that you may not fall under judgment**”

In taking an oath, we testify to something greater than ourselves

- Jesus mentions a few ideas
 - Heaven
 - Earth
 - Jerusalem

In courtrooms, the practice is to put your hand on a Bible and testify, “I will tell the truth, the whole truth, *so help me God*”

- The person is swearing, in the presence of God, that he/she will tell the truth

⁷ Mackay, 348.

⁸ Currid, 40.

⁹ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the OT, Vol 1*, 398.

¹⁰ Ronald F. Youngblood, *Everyman’s Bible Commentary, Exodus*, 97.

The 3rd Commandment is in effect here

- If you invoke the name of God in an oath, but take no regard to its serious nature, then you are guilty of taking the Name of the Lord in vain!

Think about it

- If you mention the Name of the Lord in a flippant, haphazard, careless manner, what are you indicating?

You are indicating that God Himself is

- Flippant
- Haphazard
- Careless

To degrade the Name of the Lord is degrade the Lord Himself!¹¹

- His Name is His very essence, character, and nature

This isn't to say that it is wrong to use the Lord's name

- After all, God has listed His covenant name almost 7000 in the OT
- He wants us to address Him personally¹²

Some Jews, however, refuse to say the name Yahweh

- They fear that they will misuse it

Neither is the 3rd Commandment a statement that it is wrong to take oaths¹³

- There are OT (Deut 6:13; Ps 63:11; Jer 4:2; 12:16) and NT (Rom 1:9; 9:1; Phil 1:8; Rev 10:5, 6) instances of people taking oaths, often in the name of the Lord

So the heart of the 3rd Commandment is both negative and positive

- Negatively, Israel was not to use the Name of the LORD “**in vain**”
- Positively, Israel was to revere, honor, bless, and sanctify the Name of the LORD

Negatively, we are not to use the Name of the Lord in any manner that is¹⁴

- Trivial
- Flippant
- Blasphemous
- Careless
- Misleading

Positively, we are to use the Name of the Lord only in ways that honor Him

- Praise
- Prayer
- Thanksgiving

We should never use the name of the Lord in a way that tries to manipulate Him

- We should never use His name for our own selfish, sinful purposes

¹¹ Youngblood, 97.

¹² Ryken, 579.

¹³ Kaiser, 423.

¹⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, 398.

He is not our Magic Genie

- He is the Sovereign God

for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

There is a threat of consequences given with the 3rd Commandment

- We are told in so many words, “You won’t get away with taking the Name of the Lord in vain”

Being a just God, Yahweh would hold Israel accountable for their actions

- They will not go unpunished

Think of how the Israelites were hearing this

- God was manifesting His presence on Mt. Sinai with lightning, thunder, trumpet sounds, and a dark cloud

Surely this awesome demonstration added to the severity of these Commandments

- God wasn’t just a figment of their imagination
- He was the true and living God

The 3rd Commandment isn’t designed to protect Yahweh

- It is to protect Israel!¹⁵

God is very capable of defending Himself

- But Israel must be warned not to treat His name in a way that dishonors Him

It is quite frequent to hear someone use “damn” and “God” today

- We are quick to say, “That is using God’s name in vain.”
- And I agree with that assessment

But let’s not limit the 3rd Commandment just to that

- There are countless ways in which God’s name is dishonored

Let me mention just a few

- Using God’s name as part of an incantation, magic, or fortune telling¹⁶
- Making light of it¹⁷
- Mocking it
- Speaking in a disrespectful manner
- Knowingly lying by referencing God’s name in court
- Claiming that God has spoken to you (false prophet)
- Telling others that you know what God wants them to do
- Using the phrase “God bless you” as if this was a mantra
- Using Christian logos or God’s name to boost sales¹⁸
- Attempting to worship Him without your heart being involved (just going through the motions)

¹⁵ John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary, Exodus*, 288.

¹⁶ Cornelis Houtman, *Historical Commentary on the OT, Exodus, Vol 3*, 35.

¹⁷ Stuart, 455-56.

¹⁸ Ryken, 586.

What a difference this is from the way in which Christ taught His disciples to pray

- “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name’ (Mt 6:9)

We should do everything we can to honor the name of God

- We should never do anything that would bring dishonor to His name

Jesus uttered these words in Matthew 7¹⁹

- “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’” (Mt 7:21-22)

Did you hear what these condemned people are saying?

- “did we not prophesy in Your name?”
- “in Your name cast out demons”
- “in Your name perform many miracles”

Don’t think that just because you use the name of God and see results that you are saved!

- There are people in hell who used the name of the Lord during their earthly lives

We are also told in Philippians 2

- “Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name” (Phil 2:9)

Then we read, “that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:10-11)

There is so much wrapped up in Jesus’ name

- It is His very nature, essence, and being

II. Commandment 4: Rest (20:8-11)

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

The 4th Commandment is the longest of the 10 Commandments²⁰

The 4th Commandment is different from the first three

- That is because this one is stated positively, not negatively²¹

Only the 4th and 5th Commandments are stated in positive terms

- The other eight are stated in negative terms

The 4th Commandment begins by saying, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy”

¹⁹ Ryken, 587.

²⁰ Durham, 288.

²¹ Currid, 41.

Remember what?

- I think there is a two-fold reference to “remember”

First, in verse 11, reference is made to creation

- The Israelites were to remember God’s actions after creation

Second, in Deuteronomy 5, the Israelites are told to remember their time of slavery in Egypt

- They were to remember their liberation and the freedom they now enjoy

The obvious danger was that in not remembering the Sabbath day, the Israelites would be profaning it

- Treating it like any other day
- Treating it as a common day

On the contrary, by remembering the Sabbath, the Israelites would “keep it holy”

- A day set apart
- A special day
- A unique day

We have already discussed the Sabbath back in Exodus 16²²

- This is the account of Israel gathering the manna

Israel was to go out and gather manna every day

- But on the 6th day, they were to go out and gather twice as much
- Because there was to be no manna on the Sabbath

Some obeyed

- Some disobeyed

Although the Sabbath was mentioned back in Exodus 16, this is the first time that it is explicitly put down in writing

- The first time it is codified as law

9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work.

God sets the workweek at six days

- “Six days you shall labor and do all your work”

God could have set up things differently

- He could have established one day of work and six days of rest
- But He didn’t

God has told mankind to work for six days

- To “labor and do all your work”

I hope that you realize that work isn’t sinful

- Adam was called to work even before the Fall

²² John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*, 214.

In Genesis 2:15, we read, “**Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it**”

- “**cultivate**” is the same word as “**labor**” in Exodus 20:9

In Genesis 2:2, we read, “**And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done**”

- “**work**” is the same Hebrew word, both in Genesis 2:2 and Exodus 20:9²³

Israel wasn't to be a lazy nation

- It was to be a nation filled with hard workers

God had worked and rested on the seventh day

- Israel was called to follow that pattern

10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work,

Six days the Israelites were to labor and work

- “**but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God**”

“**sabbath**” is from a Hebrew word (שַׁבָּת) meaning to rest or cease

- Hence, the reason why Israel was told not to work or labor on this day

What are some examples of activities that were prohibited on the Sabbath?²⁴

- Ploughing
- Reaping
- Pressing wine
- Carrying goods
- Bearing burdens
- Carrying on trade
- Collecting manna
- Gathering wood
- Kindling fire for baking or boiling

God is very clear about no work being done on the Sabbath

The Sabbath is to be viewed as a gift from Yahweh

- An opportunity for Israel to have a day off in order to worship and serve Him

Jesus Himself said, “**The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath**” (Mk 2:27)

- The Sabbath was designed to be a blessing, not a burden

There was a threat of death associated with working on the Sabbath

- God told Moses to put a man to death in Numbers 15

What was the crime?

- For gathering wood on the Sabbath (Num 15:32-36)!

²³ Mackay, 349.

²⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, 399.

In Leviticus 24, a man “blasphemed the Name and cursed” (24:11)

- He was put into custody until a decision was made about what to do with him

The LORD spoke to Moses

- “Bring the one who has cursed outside the camp, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head; then let all the congregation stone him. And you shall speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘If anyone curses his God, then he shall bear his sin. Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.’” (24:14-16)

you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.

Who is to stop working on the Sabbath?

- Was it just the male Jews?

According to verse 10, a whole host of people are to stop working

- “you” (the adult Jews)
- “your son or your daughter” (the children of the adult Jews)
- “your male or your female servant” (the servants of the adult Jews)
- “your cattle”
- “your sojourner”

Did you find it strange that “cattle” are told not to work on the Sabbath?

- This is because when the workers have to cease from their work, the animals can’t work by themselves

We find God’s compassion extending to the animals in other parts of the Scripture²⁵

- When God sent a worldwide, cataclysmic judgment on the Earth, He protected animals on the ark (Gen 9:8-17)
- During the final plague in Egypt, the cattle of the Israelites were spared (Ex 11:7)
- In the book of Jonah, Ninevah repented with sackcloth and ashes; we read in Jonah 3:8, “both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth”

The Sabbath wasn’t just a break from the workweek for the Hebrews

- It was for the entire family
- It was for the livestock
- It was for those who were non-Jews who were dwelling in the camp of Israel²⁶

11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day;

The 4th Commandment goes back to creation

- Israel was to remember what God did back in Genesis

²⁵ Davis, 215-16.

²⁶ Mackay, 350.

Listen to these words from Genesis 2

- “Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.” (2:1-3)

God Himself “rested on the seventh day”

- God didn’t work all seven days of the week

Was this because God was weary after creation?

- Certainly not!

Isaiah 40:28 tells us, “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired”

God didn’t take a break on the Sabbath for His benefit

- He did this for the benefit of His people
- He merely set the pattern

Think about it

- Every Sabbath, Israel was to take a break from the normal activities

As Israel reflected upon the Sabbath, they would think about God resting from His act of creation

- This would be an excellent time to be reminded of God’s almighty power in creation

Perhaps as foreigners asked, “Why do you celebrate the Sabbath?,” Israel would have an opportunity to proclaim the truth about God as Creator

For themselves, they would remember that Adam once enjoyed work in a perfect world

- But through sin, work was toilsome and burdensome

Even resting on the Sabbath would give Israel yet another opportunity to reflect upon some key truths

- The sinfulness of man
- The need for salvation

therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

The Sabbath wasn’t just a day of rest

- It was a day that had a purpose for resting

The Israelites were to realize that the Lord Himself “blessed” the Sabbath day

- The Sabbath day was “holy”

The essence of “holy” is that of something different

- Something unique
- Something out of the ordinary

In a small way, they would be imitating God

- He rested on the seventh day

In a greater way, they were called to enjoy the blessing of God

- For their bodies to be refreshed by a day off
- For their souls to be nourished by a day of worship and service

The Old Testament lists four (4) reasons to keep the Sabbath²⁷

- Let's note these

First, after creation, God rested on the seventh day

- He blessed it, thus setting it apart as unique and special

Second, the Israelites were to remember their time of slavery and bondage in Egypt (cf. Deut 5)

- The day of rest was in complete contrast to the seven-day workweek in Egypt
- God was being gracious to them

Third, the Sabbath was a day of rest, refreshment, and recuperation²⁸

- “Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease *from labor* in order that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger, may refresh themselves” (Ex 23:12)
- It was a break from the normal activities of the week

Fourth, the Sabbath would become the sign of the Mosaic covenant

- “You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for *this* is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you” (Ex 31:13)

Frequently, the covenants would have an outward mark of identification²⁹

- The rainbow was the sign of the Noahic covenant
- Circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic covenant
- The Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic covenant

But what about those of us in the New Covenant?

- Is the Sabbath binding upon us?

Incidentally, the Sabbath is the only one of the Ten Commandments that is not mandated upon the Church

- That is striking!

The other nine Commandments are repeated as commands for the Church

- But not the Sabbath

This is because something monumental changed with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ

The Sabbath is not Sunday

- Let's be clear about that
- The Sabbath is Saturday

But what do we find after the resurrection of Christ?

- The church gathered on Sunday, the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2; Rev 1:10)

²⁷ Youngblood, 97.

²⁸ Currid, 42.

²⁹ Ibid., 97.

Why the switch?

- Why didn't the Church gather on the Sabbath?

Jesus was resurrected on Sunday, the first day of the week

- “Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave” (Mt 28:1; Mk 16:2; Lk 24:1; John 20:1)

If we look in the NT, we find the Sabbath referred to 60 times

- 50x in the Gospels
- 8x in the book of Acts

That means in the remaining 22 books of the NT, the Sabbath is only mentioned twice

In Colossians 2:16-17, Paul writes these words, “Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day – things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.”

- The believers at Colossae were being influenced by legalism, mysticism, and asceticism

Paul has to write and remind them that the OT ceremonies were merely a “*shadow*”

- The apostle Paul mentions the Sabbath
- Furthermore, he calls it “a *shadow of what is to come*”

Then Paul writes these words, “*but the substance belongs to Christ*”

- Christ is the substance
- The Sabbath (along with other things) are just a shadow

The last NT reference is found in the book of Hebrews

- A book written to some Jews who were being tempted to forsake Jesus Christ and go back to the legalism of Judaism

In Hebrews 4, the author says, “*There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His*” (4:9-10)

We enjoy small bits of rest here on Earth

- But in heaven, this rest will be eternal

In heaven, we will experience what God experienced on the seventh day of creation

- A total rest
- A total cessation of activity

B.B. Warfield said it this way

- “Christ took the Sabbath into the grave with Him and brought the Lord's Day out of the grave with him on the resurrection morn³⁰”

The moral teaching of the 4th Commandment is that we are to set aside time from the normal workweek to worship Him and rest

- Sunday should be devoted to the Lord's work

³⁰ Ryken, 597.

The ceremonial portion of the 4th Commandment has passed away

- For us, we worship on Sunday, not Saturday
- The Lord's Day, not the Sabbath

What should we do on Sunday?

- Sleep in?
- Go fishing?
- Go hunting?
- Play sports?
- Attend to our hobbies?

To try and say what we can and can't do would be to put ourselves back into bondage and legalism

- I can't set the rules for you

First and foremost, Sunday is the Lord's Day

- It is shocking to see many professing Christians who don't even make attendance for church a high priority

Sunday morning is when we gather as a church family

- You should come ready to worship Him

But you should also come ready to serve

- Encourage
- Serve with your spiritual giftedness

Sunday is not a day off

- It is a day when we are called to gather, serve, encourage, and minister

As we interact with one another, I oftentimes hear people say, "I am tired."

- I have said this many times myself

Could not part of the reason we are so tired is that we seldom take any time off?

- Some of you work more than one job
- Some of you work at least 6 days a week

Corporate America is all about more hours³¹

- They may even pay you nicely for doing so

But that comes at a price

- A deadly price

While we are not bound to keep the Sabbath in a legalistic way, we have to ask ourselves

- When do you take time off?
- When do you rest and relax with your family?
- When do you take time to minister and serve?

I think we should all rethink what it means to retire

- That doesn't mean the total cessation of all work

³¹ Houtman, 48.

To retire just means to refire

- A change of focus
- A change of direction

It would be so neat if some of you who are retired would think about devoting part of your week to serving the Lord in some capacity

- Serving the local church

The first four Commandments deal with our relationship with God

- Do we have other gods beside the true God?
- Have we made, worshipped, or served idols or likenesses of gods?
- Have we dishonored the name of the Lord?
- Have we neglected the Lord's day as a day of worship and service?

We are all guilty of these at many times in our lives

- We have not loved God as we should
- We have not loved God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength

But what we are going to look at next week, the Lord willing, is that we have not loved our neighbor as ourselves

- It will be a convicting study over the next few weeks