

**Texts: Exodus 3:1-15; 34:4-10**

And *Moshe* was keeping the flock of his father-in-law *Yitro*, the priest of *Midian*, and he directed the flock beyond the desert and came to *Horeb*, the mountain of *Elohim*. The messenger-angel of *YHWH* appeared to him in a flaming fire from the midst of a bush. He saw, and behold, the bush was burning with fire but the bush was not consumed. And *Moshe* said I will turn aside now and see this great sight of why the bush does not burn.

When *YHWH* saw that he turned aside to look, *Elohim* called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “*Moshe! Moshe!*” and he said, “Here I am.” And he said, “Do not draw near to this place; take off your sandals from your feet for the very place you stand is holy ground. Moreover he said, “I am the *Elohe* of your father, the *Elohe* of *Abraham*, the *Elohe* of *Yizchaq*, and the *Elohe* of *Yaaqob*.” And *Moshe* hid his face for he was afraid to look upon *Elohim*.

And *YHWH* said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry because of their affliction for I know their pain. Therefore, I have come down to deliver them from the hand of Egypt and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey; to the place of the *Canaanite*, *Hittite*, *Amorite*, *Perizzite*, *Hivite*, and the *Jebusite*. So behold, the cry of the Sons of *Yisrael* has come to me and I have also seen the oppression with which Egypt has oppressed them. Therefore, come and I will send you to Pharaoh so that you may bring my people the Sons of *Yisrael* out of Egypt.”

But *Moshe* said to *Elohim*, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh; that I should bring the Sons of *Yisrael* out of Egypt?” So he said, “Surely I WILL BE with you, and this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, y’all shall *abad Elohim* on this mountain.” And Moses said to God, “If I come to the Sons of *Yisrael* and say to them, ‘The *Elohe* of your fathers has sent me to you’ and they say to me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” And *Elohim* said to *Moshe*, “I WILL BE who I WILL BE.” And he said, “Thus you shall say to the Sons of *Yisrael*, ‘I WILL BE has sent me to you.’” Moreover, *Elohim* said to *Moshe*, “Thus you shall say to the Sons of *Yisrael*: *YHWH*, the *Elohe* of your fathers, the *Elohe* of *Abraham*, the *Elohe* of *Yizchaq*, and the *Elohe* of *Yaaqob* has sent me to you. This is my everlasting name, my memorial to all generations.”

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*Moshe* cut two tablets of stone like the first, rose early in the morning, went up on Mount *Sinai* as *YHWH* had commanded him, and took the two tablets of stone in hand. *YHWH*

descended in a cloud, stood with him there, and proclaimed his name: *YHWH*. *YHWH* passed before him and proclaimed, *YHWH* of *YHWH*’s is a compassionate and gracious God; slow to anger; abounding in *hesed* and truth; keeping *hesed* to the thousandth generation; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, but by no means acquitting the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons and children of their sons to the third and fourth generation.

*Moshe* hurriedly bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped. And he said, “Not if I have found favor in your sight, *Adonai*, I pray, let my *Adonai* go among us for we are a stiff-necked people; forgive our iniquity and our sin, and take us as your inheritance.” And he said, “Behold, I make a covenant before all your people. I will do wondrous-miracles such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; all the people among whom you are shall see the work of *YHWH* for it is a fearfully-awe-striking-thing that I will do with you.

### **Illustration and Introduction**

At ten months old a young girl found herself being taken from an orphanage in Krasnodar, Russia and flown to the other side of the globe to be raised in a Christian home in America. Her birth mother had given her the name Nadezhda, which in Russian means Hope.

I don’t know anything about this little girl’s birth mother. I don’t know if she chose that name on purpose or if it is a common Russian name like Ivan or Anastasia. But I do know that a mother out there gave up her daughter named Hope to an orphanage where there was maybe a chance that that baby girl would get a better life than what that mother could give her. A mother, who lost all hope, gave up her daughter Hope, in the hopes that Hope would have a better life. After naming this girl Rachel, my parents retained her birth name as her middle name; a constant reminder of *YHWH*’s provision of a daughter to a couple who themselves had hoped for a girl.

This makes for a heartwarming story because in our western culture, the significance of names largely stops at merely differentiating one person from another. I am Daniel from the tribe of Harrison, but my father is also Daniel from the tribe of Harrison, and so I have the suffix “JR” at the end to differentiate me from my father, at least on paper. This is just how names work in our culture. But in my sister’s story, the name Nadezhda transcends the mere differentiation between baby girls in an orphanage. In the *ANE* culture in which the Bible was written, names moved beyond your tribe to reveal your identity and story. Names in the Bible function in ways that indicate one’s identity and story.

Here are a couple examples. One of the first biblical characters we meet is this fellow named Abram, which means “father;” yet after his covenantal encounter with God, his name was changed to Abraham, which means “father of many,” which is directly tied to the content of that covenantal encounter. An infant boy in Egypt was placed by his mother into the chaos waters in a woven tabernacle, and when he was drawn out of the waters by Pharaoh’s daughter, she named him Moses, which means “drawn out” or “delivered.” The name of Moses identifies him with the story of his deliverance as an infant, but also foreshadows when God would separate the chaos waters to reveal dry ground on which Moses would draw out God’s people.

The biblical concept of names as indicative of one’s identity and story is no longer the standard operating procedure in the delivery room. We need to retrain our minds to this ANE concept to understand the third commandment. Exploring the name of the God of the Bible is a quest to define who God is. The Bible intentionally reveals the name of our God to us; God wants us to use his name, but insists we use it in a special way, in view of our personal relationship with him.

### **The Story of Elohim**

The Bible begins to unfold the story of who God is at the very beginning. Genesis 1 starts: in the beginning, *Elohim*. This word Elohim is not a name but a title for the deity who created everything; the one who separated light from darkness; the one who brought out of the chaos waters a good land; the one who set humanity as the image of his majesty in his cosmic-temple. The stories of the Bible progressively clarify the identity and character of this Creator-Elohim. The name of this Elohim is first used in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. These prototypical priests in the first earthly temple enjoyed intimate fellowship with God, and so it is no wonder that throughout Genesis 2 we read of the activity of *YHWH* Elohim. In fact, every instance of the Elohim in reference to either Adam or Eve is attached with the personal name: not just Elohim, but *YHWH* Elohim.

That is... until Genesis 3. “Now the serpent was craftier than any beast that *YHWH* Elohim had made. The serpent asked the woman, “Did Elohim actually say, ‘y’all can’t eat from any tree in the garden?’” She responded, ‘We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. But as for the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, Elohim said, ‘y’all must not eat it or touch it, or y’all will die.’”

The serpent removed the personal identity of YHWH with which Eve enjoyed, she followed suit, and that personal name is not used again until after they break the one law; in verse 8 YHWH Elohim reenters when he goes to the garden for his evening stroll. The loss of the name was a loss of intimate fellowship with YHWH, leaving Adam and Eve vulnerable to violate YHWH Elohim’s one boundary established for their personal relationship.

Exodus 2 continues the Bible’s revealing of Elohim’s identity. After centuries of slavery in Egypt, the Elohim heard the cries of the Israelites and responded in accordance to his covenant with Abraham. In Exodus 3, when the angel of YHWH appeared from within the burning bush, the voice identified itself as the Elohim of Abraham; or in other words, this Elohim identified itself with the Bible’s unfolding story of covenant-redemption.

Moses, though, objects to the plan to send him to redeem Israel. Who am I to do such a thing?! Elohim responds in verse 12, “I WILL BE with you.” Or in other words, it doesn’t matter who you are because I WILL BE with you. The Hebrew word for “I WILL BE” is *ehweh*. Moses objects a second time—“If I tell them, ‘The *Elohe* of your fathers has sent me’ and they ask, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say?” Elohim responds in verse 14, *ehweh asher ehweh*.

This famous “I AM THAT I AM” phrase uses the same word as in verse 12, where YHWH promised Moses, “I WILL BE with you.” This is when the grammar gets interesting. In Hebrew, ‘*eh*’ means “I” and ‘*ya*’ means “he.” In our first passage, Elohim calls himself *ehweh*, but when he gives his name to Moses for the people to speak, they are to call him *YHWH*—*Ehweh*, *YHWH*. When Elohim says his own name, he says *ehweh* “I WILL BE,” but when Moses or anyone else says Elohim’s name, we say *YHWH* “He will be.”<sup>1</sup> YHWH is a God of promise.

This is further elaborated in Exodus 34 when YHWH revealed more of his character in connection to his name. “YHWH passed before [Moses] and proclaimed, ‘YHWH of YHWH’s.’” When the Bible repeats the same word twice in a row, it is emphasizing that word to the utmost degree. Just like holy of holies, amen and amen, king of kings, and Lord of Lords, YHWH of YHWH’s speaks of God as the one who *will be* and *will do* par excellence. Exodus 34 is a significant passage. Whenever you read in the Bible hereafter about the character of God, they are in almost every instance quoting from this passage. God has just told us who he is, and the prophets insist on defining God with his own terms rather than create their own.

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Mackie, “I AM WHO I AM: Yahweh is our God.” Sermon accessed on YouTube.

YHWH is the one who will be a compassionate and gracious God. YHWH is the one who will be slow to anger with a longsuffering patience. YHWH is the one who will abound in covenant-faithfulness and truth. YHWH is the one who will forgive sins. YHWH is the one who will not acquit the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers to the third and fourth generation, but who will also keep covenant-faithfulness to the thousandth generation. The defining characteristic of who God is is revealed in his name, defining the character and redemptive-work of God as that of promise and certainty. Calling on YHWH’s name is a statement of faith in the one who will be who he has promised to be; a statement of faith in the one who will do what he has promised to do.

And the name of YHWH has been abused by one of the prominent demonic heresies of our day: the prosperity gospel, which states that if you just believe enough, your faith can move God to do whatever you want. If you just believe enough, then God will have to give you a raise; he’ll just have to heal your cancer; he’ll just have to save your children or spouse. I mean, after all, you’ve named and claimed it, right? The prosperity gospel twists God’s name into a mechanism through which they attempt to manipulate God to satisfy their *own* will. There are many issues with the prosperity gospel: I will, for now, restrain myself to just two.

First, when God revealed his character in Exodus 34, there is nothing stated about health and wealth. Each description speaks to an aspect of God’s redemption. “YHWH of YHWH’s is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in covenant-faithfulness to the thousandth generation, forgiving...sin. But he will not acquit the guilty.” After hearing these words, Moses pled with YHWH to forgive Israel’s sin. YHWH responded, “Behold, I make a covenant before all your people. I will do wondrous-miracles that have never been done in all the earth; all people shall see the work of YHWH, for it is a fearfully-awe-striking-thing that I will do with you.” And second, God’s faithfulness to what he has promised to be and do cannot be manipulated with vain words, but is something God does on his own. Ezekiel writes that YHWH redeems us for the sake of his name in spite of our sinfulness. The prosperity gospel’s twisting of the promises connected to the name of YHWH profanes the name of YHWH.

### **The Placing and Giving of the Name**

The vocabulary in the Third Commandment has nothing to do with speech. The key verb is *nasa*, which means to carry or lift up, and refers to outward behavior; *nasa* is how one carries

their allegiance. A cattleman will often brand his cattle with a permanent mark to clearly claim his ownership. YHWH does this as well. In several places in his story of covenant-redemption, YHWH placed his name on five things and gave his name to one. When YHWH does this—when he places his name on something—YHWH is branding those people and places as belonging to him. YHWH placed his name on the tabernacle (Lev. 24:10-16, 23 Deut. 12:5). YHWH placed his name on the people of Israel (Num. 6:27). YHWH placed his name on the Promised Land toward which he was leading his people and tabernacle (Deut. 14:23). YHWH placed his name on Jerusalem and Zion, the city of his permanent temple (2 Kings 21:4; cf. Deut. 12:11, 21). And in Amos 9:11-15, YHWH placed his name on Gentiles who swear their allegiance to him; there would come a day when YHWH would raise up the Messianic King who would restore all things and gather God’s people together; the remnant to be gathered would be marked by their carrying of YHWH’s name.

Who is this Messianic King? He is none other than the individual to whom YHWH gave his name; the one described by Isaiah as the suffering servant: “I have put my Spirit on him...I will give him as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations to open the eyes of the blind... I am YHWH; that is my name; my glory [and praise] I give to none other” (Isa. 42:1-8).

“I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake; I will not remember your sins” (Isa. 43:23-25). “For my name’s sake I defer my anger...for my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will give to none other” (Isa. 48:9-11). “[He] was not rebellious...[He] gave [his] back to those who strike...[He] hid not [his] face from disgrace and spitting...who among you fears YHWH and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness...trust in the name of YHWH” (Isa. 50:4-10).

“Behold, my servant [shall be raised up and exalted]... He had no form of majesty...that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men... Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows...he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; [to bring] us peace; [for] by his wounds we are healed... YHWH has laid on him the iniquity of us all...they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth...[but] when his soul makes an offering for guilt...[then] his soul shall see and be satisfied... the righteous one, my servant, shall [make many] righteous by bearing their iniquities” (Isa. 52:13-53:12).

“[They] shall be saved by YHWH with an everlasting salvation... Assemble yourselves and...draw near...There is no other Elohim besides me, a just and saving God; there is none except me. Turn to me and be saved; all [you] ends of the earth, for I am God and there is no other...I have sworn by myself; out of my mouth has gone a righteous word that shall not return in vain: Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear their allegiance [to the God who makes his people righteous for his glory]” (Isa. 45:17-25).

### **Presentation of the Gospel**

Who is this Messianic King, the servant to whom YHWH gives his name? Paul writes in Phil. 2 that while existing as God, Jesus...emptied himself, by being born in the likeness of men and taking the form of a servant. And having been found in the appearance of man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Thus, God exalted him and gave him the name above every other name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. The Messianic King, the Servant foreseen by Isaiah, is Jesus, whose name means “God *is* salvation.”

What YHWH’s name promised he will do was accomplished by Jesus’ virgin birth, virtuous life, vicarious death, victorious resurrection, visible ascension, and vindicating exaltation. What YHWH’s name promised he will be, was clearly realized in the person and work of Jesus Christ. YHWH promised to Moses, “I WILL BE with you.” But Jesus told his disciples, “I AM with you” (Matt. 28:20). In Christ, the great I WILL BE has become I AM; in Christ, the great I WILL DO has become It is Finished. Who YHWH promised to be in Exodus was fulfilled in the Gospel; the person and work of Jesus Christ is the climax to YHWH’s story of covenant-redemption. YHWH’s covenant-faithfulness is proven to us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). YHWH’s grace is shown to us in that Christ who knew no sin became our sin so that we who know no righteousness would become his righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). YHWH’s longsuffering patience is shown in that while we like sheep have wandered about in recklessness, Jesus leaves the 99 to seek out the one who repents, that he may lead sinners home and celebrate what once was lost but has now been found (Matt. 18:12; Luke 15:23-24). YHWH’s compassion is shown in his offer of living water to satisfy all who thirst (John 4:14); that still small voice that says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone

hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in, I will eat with him, and he will eat with me” (Rev. 3:20).

As one evangelist said, “Jesus is the pearl from paradise; he the gem from the glory land. He’s truth’s fairest jewel and he’s time’s choicest theme. He’s life’s strongest chord and he’s light’s clearest ray... His name stands as a synonym for free healing, friendly help, and full salvation. His blessed name is like honey to the taste; it’s like harmony to the ear; it’s like health to the soul; it’s like hope to the heart. He’s higher than the heaven of heavens and he’s holier than the holy of holies. In his birth is our significance; in his life is our example; in his cross is our redemption; and in his resurrection is our hope. At his birth men came from the east and at his death men came from the west, and the east and the west met in him... [that] at his name, to his name, in his name every knee [will] bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”<sup>2</sup>

One theologian has said that “the question is not whether we will bend the knee before Christ; that will happen (Phil. 2:9-11). The question is whether we will do it like a defeated foe when it is too late or if we [will] do it now, humbly asking for mercy.”<sup>3</sup> Isaiah commands us to “Seek YHWH while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way; and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to YHWH, that he may have compassion on him...for [our God] will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55:1-13). Have you called on the name of Jesus for your salvation? Have you repented of your sins and believed the Gospel? Jesus lived the life we fail to live, he died in our place the death our sins deserve, and was raised from the dead so that all who call on his name will be forgiven of their sins, given a new heart, indwelt by the Holy Spirit who empowers you right now to live as a new creation, and given the promise of *intimate* fellowship with YHWH Elohim from everlasting to everlasting.

### **Implications and Conclusion**

YHWH has placed his name on all who are in Christ, and so it is a Christian’s duty to carry the name of Jesus in ways that bring honor to YHWH; ways that bring glory to God. One commentator said that “God [revealed] to Israel his name...[and gave] them the corresponding privilege of calling on that name in worship and in time of need. Along with this privilege came

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<sup>2</sup> S.M. Lockridge, “Where A Sick Man Can Be Made Well.” Sermon accessed on YouTube.

<sup>3</sup> Kevin DeYoung on Twitter July 9, 2021.

the responsibility of honor and respect. Israel was not to call on God’s name ‘for no good [reason],’ that is, they were not to presume upon their relationship with God and think that he was merely at their beck and call. The whole of the instructions regarding the nature of Israel’s worship...was intended to teach [us] the proper way to call on God’s name.”<sup>4</sup>

Scripture does not leave us guessing about how to avoid profaning YHWH’s name. Jesus tells us to pray “hallowed be your name.” Hallowed, or more simply, “Make holy.” Our father in heaven, make your name holy (Matt. 6:9). Hallowing YHWH’s name is the opposite of profaning YHWH’s name. Lev. 6(:2-5) and 19(:12) tell us that swearing an oath to the Lord *falsely* or to your neighbor *falsely* profanes the name of YHWH. Deut. 18(:20) says that prophets who *falsely* invoke the name of YHWH must die. These negative commands clearly reveal that hallowing the name is achieved by swearing *truthfully* to YHWH, or *truthfully* to your neighbor, or invoking the name of YHWH for the sake of *truth*. Deut. 6(:13) tells us Israel was required to take oaths in the name of YHWH *to ensure their truthfulness*. And Paul writes in 1 Tim. 6 that obedience to the governing authorities prevents YHWH’s name from being profaned among the nations. Even Elohim hallows his own name. In Ezekiel 20(:5-10), the prophet says Elohim rescued Israel from Egypt *for the sake of his own name*, that the other nations would not see what was happening to sinful Israel and question YHWH’s covenant-faithfulness to them. Do not carry the name of YHWH your Elohim in vain, but carry it *truthfully*. Let your ‘yes’ be yes; and your ‘no’ be no (Matt. 5:37).

When I was young and got in trouble, sometimes I heard the phrase: “This is not what Harrison’s do.” Perhaps you heard something similar. As Christians, we are part of the Family of God, and yet we often misrepresent the family by living in ways that do not line up with what we confess to be true about Jesus. Paul writes to the Corinthians that if Jesus was not raised then the death of Jesus means nothing; we ought to go pursue every worldly passion because if Jesus was not raised from the dead then nothing matters. But if he was raised from the dead, then nothing *else* matters. If we believe Jesus was raised from the dead, then that changes *everything* about who we are, what we do, and how we see our neighbor and the world. If YHWH has placed on you the name of Jesus, then his identity and his story becomes your identity and your story. Truthfully carrying the name of Jesus will be hard; Scripture tells us those who carry his name

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<sup>4</sup> John Sailhamer. *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008; page 286.

will face persecution. Six times in Revelation’s seven letters to the churches, carrying the name of Jesus results in persecution. There will come a day when our true allegiance will be forced when all will either carry the mark of the beast *or* the mark of the Lamb (Rev. 13:6, 17; 14:1-12). Paul writes in Gal. 6 that he bears the mark of the Lamb on his body through his being persecuted for the Gospel.

Comparatively speaking, we know little of persecution in our present context, but that doesn’t mean we don’t face persecution at all from coworkers or family members who mistake our attempts to obey Scripture’s moral imperatives as bigotry; or, most significantly, who insist we are delusional for believing a man was raised from the dead. Immense persecution is on Christians in Nigeria, Somalia, and North Korea who risk their very lives to do a fraction of what we have done and will do this morning. Christians endure persecution for the name of Jesus because we believe YHWH will vindicate us on the day of Christ’s vowed return. While we don’t face that level of persecution now, a day will come when we will. How you carry the name of Jesus now prepares you for that day.

We practice carrying the name of Jesus in our Monday-Saturday lives by remembering our new identity in Christ. We do this by fellowshiping with other Christians. We do this by filling our homes with God-glorifying music. We do this by eating, crying, hugging, and praying with other Christians. We do this by taking care of our spiritual hygiene through daily Scripture meditation and prayer. We do this by intentionally forgiving those who do not deserve it or ask for it. We do this by not worrying about whether God will heal our cancer, or get us more money, but instead by trusting that he *will* provide what he knows we need, the utmost provision being eternal life, where Rev. 22 says we will be with him, see his face, and our foreheads will be forever branded by his name. And we do this by remembering YHWH’s story of covenant-redemption in the sacraments. When we take communion, it is a reminder that Jesus wore my sin and bore my shame so the king of kings may call me his own and the cross may cry out that I am forgiven. And when we are baptized or witness a baptism, it is a reminder that *with Christ* we too have been and will be raised to new life.

Let’s pray.