

For example, I am looking at an official document of the state in which I live. It is signed with the name of the secretary of the commonwealth. Certainly the secretary does not write all these by hand, but when her name is stamped on the card, it carries with it the authority of the law of the state. The name is the symbol of power and must not be abused.

So with the name of God. God's personal name suggests one who ~~was~~ always was, is and will be (Exodus 5:4). It was not pronounced by the careful Hebrew leaders in the time of Jesus and thereafter. They substituted another word so as not to defile the name for they knew that the name carried with it the force of the Master of the Universe. This name is often compounded with other words to give personal representations of deity. But neither the name nor the compounded forms could be disgraced or used abusively in the light of the command. The actual thrust of the teaching is: "Don't speak of me in any way that harms my name or speaks ill of my power."

The importance of the name may be gleaned from its identification with the places of Israel's worship. What made the worship center unique was the presence of the Divine Name. Deuteronomy 12:5 gives us legislation on this point and the heart of the Levitical feasts centered around such a place (Deut. 26:2). The Name of the Lord was virtually everything for His people and they could not afford to mar it, abuse it, or overlook the reality of its blessing.

The Third Commandment Explanation

In the command, the Lord gives us a very broad starting point for our observations. "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." The basic thrust of "take" is the idea of lifting up. The thought is that