

“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.”
Exodus 20:7

THE MAJESTY OF HIS NAME

THE MOSAIC COVENANT, handed down at Sinai after the exodus from Egypt, was essentially an agreement of *action*.

“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

Exodus 19:5-6a

For Jehovah God to be held to His end of the contract, Israel had to “obey me fully and keep my covenant.” They were given page after page of meticulous rules and regulations, dos and don’ts, specifically-ordered methods for conducting personal, community, and national activities. It was a tall order, and one which, not surprisingly, they were ultimately incapable of carrying out.

In contrast, the covenant established at the cross, when Jesus took upon Himself the full curse of the Sinai Law in order to redeem mankind, was an agreement of the *heart*.

...that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God

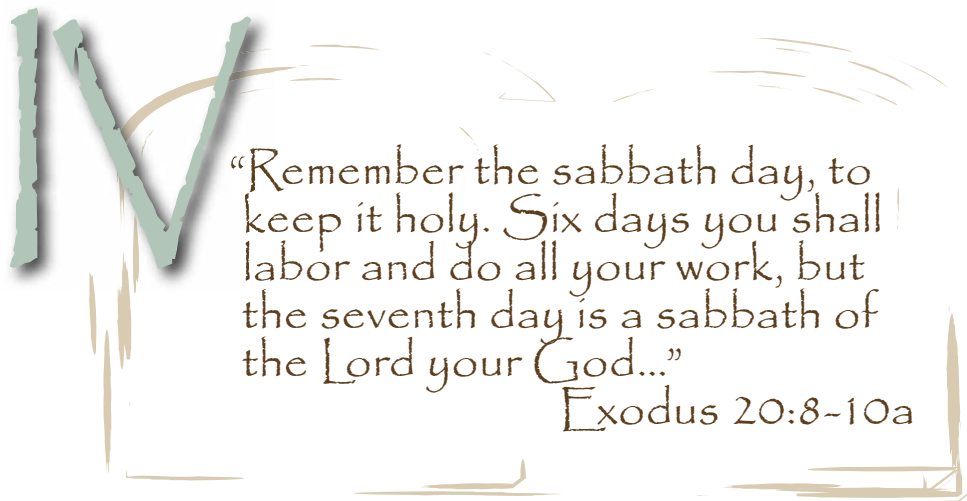
raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Romans 10:9-10

The essential component of the New Covenant is belief—not the strict adherence to a list of regulations. Yet actions are not removed, but simply shifted to a different place. In Jesus, the agreement is established within the heart when we believe; our actions do not secure God’s side of the bargain. Instead of their original place *before* the transaction, our actions have now been moved to a point after. Our actions now become a testimony to what has occurred within the confines of our heart and mind.

God’s name is no less holy today. More than simply a manner of address or designation, God’s name represents the entirety of His nature and personality; to use lightly or profane this holy Name is to profane the very One it describes.

So how, then, can one with Christ in his heart profane the Name of His Father?



A HOLY REST

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE LEGALISTS of His day, Jesus had this really annoying habit of explaining God's purpose in ways that made them look foolish. Here they had gone to all the trouble to outline and dissect the law, breaking it down, for example, into thirty-nine specific activities that were forbidden on the Sabbath, when this rogue Messiah comes along and stirs up their neat and tidy oligarchy. And one kind of forbidden "work" from their list was reaping.

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath."

Matthew 12:1-2

Jesus, in His own words, came to fulfill the Law, but He also came to explain it. In the more than 1,200 years since the Law had come down from God through Moses, Israel had sliced and diced it into mountainous volumes of rules and regulations. In the process, they had lost sight of the true spirit and purpose of the Law. Jesus gave them some help.

But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

Matthew 12:3-8

But we must not mistake the means for the end. We must not think that the Sabbath is just for the sake of being able to attend meetings. There are some people who think they must spend the whole day at meetings or private devotions. The result is that at nightfall they are tired out and the day has brought them no rest. Attending meetings is not the only way to observe the Sabbath. The Israelites were commanded to keep it in their dwellings as well as in holy convocation. The home, that centre of so great influence over the life and character of the people, ought to be made the scene of true Sabbath observance.

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