

## The Ten Commandments - Part 13: Graven Images, Third Commandment - Taking the Lord's Name in Vain (5/7/2023)

The following text is a message from Corner Fringe Ministries that was presented by Daniel Joseph. The original presentation can be viewed at <https://www.cornerfringe.com/media/zs8g7zg/the-ten-commandments-part-13>

**\*Portions of this document have been edited from the video message to better present a comprehensive, written document. Special attention was given to preserve the original context, but this document is not verbatim. Scripture verses are in the red text with other quotes in blue. Therefore, it is recommended that this document is printed in color. The Hebrew words are generally accompanied by the transliterate, English word. In most cases, the Hebrew is to be read from right to left.**

For several weeks, we have been taking some time to process and discuss various aspects of the Ten Commandments, topics that were quite important to cover upfront. We also discussed various arguments made by professing Christians that would have us believe that the Ten Commandments are no longer valid for Christians today; that they no longer have authority; and that we are no longer to receive instruction or conviction from them.

Today we will get back to work and dig into the commandments themselves. If you haven't been with us for a while, just to bring you up to speed, thus far we've actually covered the first two commandments within the Ten Commandments.

The first commandment being this: Exodus 20:3 – **<sup>3</sup> You shall have no other gods before Me** (*emphasis added*). That's pretty straightforward. Just to reiterate, this is the Lord showing that He doesn't deal with competition well. He doesn't appreciate it. He doesn't want part of your heart or almost all of it. He wants everything: your total faith, your hope, and your trust needs to be in Him 100 percent.

Then we moved to the second commandment: Exodus 20:4 – **<sup>4</sup> You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth** (*emphasis added*). There is one more thing that I need to cover in regard to this commandment. It's something that needs clarification and understanding.

Many years ago, I had a gentleman ask me a question that I've been asked in so many various ways over the years. Like a revival, Christians are waking up to the Torah, and it's a whole new experience. They are rushing in and seeing the whole Bible and in the process, all sorts of questions are arising. One of those questions inevitably is trying to define what a graven/carved image is. You can go into houses and some people have teddy bears or maybe the young girls play with dolls.

In this situation, this gentleman that I was talking to many years ago had a moose that was whittled out of wood. It was a decorative item on his end table. He asked me, after reading the second commandment, "Is this a graven image because this is a thing on the earth? It's an image of something on the earth. Do I need to burn this (Deuteronomy 7)?"

My response was, “Well, it depends.” He said, “Depends on what?” I responded, “Do you burn incense to it? Do you sacrifice to it? Have you bent the knee to it? Have you called upon it for help? Have you called upon it for healing? Have you called upon it to prosper you or provide for you? This is about worship.” He said, “Of course not!”

We need to discuss what this commandment is really saying and what it is not saying before we get to the third commandment. The key is that a moose on your end table, or whatever, is no problem in and of itself, but the moment you put your heart towards it, to trust it, to depend on it, you have a serious problem. That is exactly what the second commandment is conveying. We will go through this today, and I will prove it so you understand that this is not Daniel's opinion. This is the Word of God.

It says in Exodus 20:4 – <sup>4</sup> **You shall not make for yourself a carved image ...** Then it says in Exodus 20:5 – <sup>5</sup> **you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.** (*Emphasis added*) – This is not a new statement. We should not compartmentalize this. This is not a new idea. This phrase, verse 5, goes right along with – <sup>4</sup> **You shall not make for yourself a carved image.** They're to be brought collectively together and understood.

To help you appreciate the reality of what I'm saying, let's read in the Torah, Numbers 21. There we will find that unfortunately, Israel had fallen again. They started complaining against God and Moses. The Lord had enough, so what did He do? He plagued the people with serpents. He sent serpents out that literally started killing people. We are not told in scripture the exact number that died, but it says that many in Israel died. The Lord was furious.

Israel responded: Numbers 21:7-8 – <sup>7</sup> **Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.** <sup>8</sup> **Then the LORD said to Moses. “Make a fiery serpent, – this is a bronze serpent – and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.”** (*Emphasis added*)

Let me ask you a question. Did something change between Exodus 20 and Numbers 21? Did God change his mind in regard to graven images as this is exactly what the serpent on a pole was? Obviously, I'm asking this rhetorically because the answer is: God did not change his mind. The commandment holds. Nor did God ask Israel to do something contrary to the commandment that He gave to them, that every man, woman, and child heard from Mount Sinai. He hasn't changed. This is not contradiction. It's about understanding.

Notice the absence of worship. What did He command them to do? They were commanded to simply look at this thing. Here's a perfect scriptural example that shows that it's not about making a graven image in and of itself. The serpent is very symbolic, and there's an incredible story behind all of this, but we will not get into that. I want to stay on task today. We need to make a distinction. This is not a breach of the second commandment.

Things get interesting, if you fast forward about 700 years in time, the bronze serpent re-emerges. It's virtually silent, we hear nothing about it, until the days of Hezekiah. In 2 Kings 18:4 – <sup>4</sup> **He – Hezekiah – removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and – what did he do? – broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made** – Why does Hezekiah do this? Check

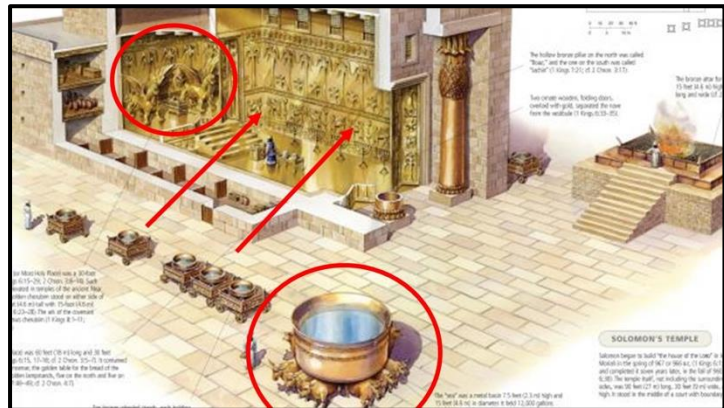
this out – **for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan** (emphasis added).

Do you understand? It was fine to make this image, but God never commanded them to worship it. They were simply supposed to look at it. There was no problem with the carved image until they burned incense to it, sacrificed to it, relied upon it, prayed to it, and called upon it as a God. Now, there was a problem, and it needed to be destroyed.

What a perfect example, so we can appreciate and understand what the second commandment is really ushering in and what it is asking. It's not asking you to get rid of the carved moose that's sitting on your end table unless you trust in it and believe in it. If you did, you would absolutely burn it.

Let me take this a step further. Solomon builds the temple and the entire temple is inundated with carved images. They are everywhere. Check this out. This is an artist's rendition of the temple.

Look at the brazen laver. Twelve oxen held up what is called the sea. The priests would wash their hands and feet in this water when they went in. The 12 oxen are symbolic. Listen to me. These graven images of bronze oxen are powerful symbols of the tribes of Israel. Notice, they point outward to the north, south, east, and west because prophetically speaking, Israel would go out into the world and be light to the nations bringing them the message of repentance and salvation, like the great commission that Yeshua commissioned the apostles with. This is very powerful imagery.



Isn't it fascinating that in Exodus 32, Israel makes one golden calf and the Lord loses it, but yet when Solomon builds the temple and makes 12 of them, there is no problem? What's the difference? In Exodus 32, they made the golden calf for the express purpose to worship it. They actually called it Yahweh. They worshipped and sacrificed to it. That's the problem. Do you understand the distinction?

Look at the walls on the inner side. You are not supposed to make carved images of things in heaven and things on earth, yet we are told scripturally that all these walls had things of heaven and things of earth. There are cherubim carved into the walls of the sanctuary. There are palm trees and flowers. These carvings were carved into the entire walls.

We could take it a step further. In the Holy of Holies, there are cherubim, images of things that are in heaven. We can go even further than that. All of the little mini lavers that Solomon built had lions, oxen and cherubim carved into them. Carvings are everywhere.

We can even talk about Solomon's house of judgment. We are told that in the house of judgment that Solomon built, Solomon sat on a great white throne. There are six steps going up to the throne, and on each step are two carved images of lions. When Solomon sat on his throne, there were two huge carved images of lions on each side of him.

Are any of these things going against the direct command of God in making images? The answer is, absolutely not. I assure you, if Jewish people went into the temple and started worshiping these oxen, their fate would have been that of what happened with the bronze serpent. It's the exact same thing. They would have torn them out.

That's when you desecrate the name of the Lord. That's when you pervert an image. Images are powerful and mean something. You look at the brazen laver with the 12 oxen and it has meaning. How many of you have menorahs in your houses? That's an image. Why do you have a menorah? I have a menorah. I have a hanukkah. They mean something to us, but the moment you bow down to that thing and start calling it Nehushtan or whatever you want to call it, that thing needs to be destroyed. That thing needs to be taken out of your house. Do you understand? Does that make sense?

I want to show you a passage in Psalms that encompasses this whole discussion on idolatry of the first and second commandment. I want to bring this full circle with this passage. In Psalm 121:1-2 – <sup>1</sup> **A Song of Ascents. I will lift up my eyes to the hills--From once comes my help?** – It's important you understand what the psalmist is doing. He's lifting his eyes to the hills. What are on the hills? It's all the high places. This is where the nations would go up to worship, burn incense and sacrifice to all the pagan deities. So, he's looking at the hills.

When I was in Israel, the very first place I went to was a high place at the top of the hill. It was a pagan altar where they sacrificed to pagan deities. The psalmist is looking at all of these options, if you will, of pagan deities that the nations and the peoples would go up to. Why would you go up to a pagan deity? You want help; you want victory; you want to prosper; you may want to be healed – you need help from the Lord. The psalmist asks, **“Where does my help come from?”** – and we know the rest – <sup>2</sup> **My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.**

This is such a cool passage that encompasses the reality of why you would want to embrace the first and second commandment. Putting any other gods in front of our God or serving carved images makes no sense because there's no help. But there is help in Yeshua, hope in Yeshua, healing in Yeshua, and forgiveness in Him, and so we go to Him. Very powerful.

Let's break some new ground today and jump into the third commandment. Exodus 20:7 – <sup>7</sup> **You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain** (*emphasis added*). Two things are said in this commandment. Obviously, the first thing is the commandment itself: **don't take His name in vain**. But the second thing, I want to deal with first: **the Lord is not going to hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain**. What does that really mean? How are we supposed to understand that?

To help you appreciate what's being conveyed, I want to show you how the Targums translate this passage. This is what Targum Neofiti Exodus 20:7 says – **My people, children of Israel, let no one of you take the Name of the Lord his God in vain, because on the day of the great judgment the Lord will not acquit the one who shall take the Name of the Lord his God in vain.** (*Emphasis added*)

Talk about putting things into perspective! When it says that **the Lord will not hold him guiltless**, it's talking about eternal judgment, life and death, heaven and hell. This puts this commandment in a completely different context. It makes you take it quite seriously. But when you think about the fact that **“the Lord will not hold him guiltless”** has been added, that's where things get very unique.

Someday, we will go through the rest of the Ten Commandments. One thing you'll notice is that “the Lord will not hold him guiltless” is lacking in the other commandment. We are told, “Thou shall not kill”, but it doesn't go on to say, “the Lord will not hold him guiltless who kills”. It says, “Thou shall not commit adultery”, but it doesn't say, “the Lord will not hold him guiltless who commits adultery”. And we could go on and on. You will not find this statement anywhere. It's the only time it is made

To make things even more bizarre, let me add this. What did we discover in the second commandment? We saw that the Lord sent a warning saying, Exodus 20:5-6 – <sup>5</sup> For I will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, <sup>6</sup> but show mercy to thousands, to those that love Me and keep My commandments. God gives this warning which is attached to the second commandment which encompasses all the commandments. But then as you get to the third commandment, we are given a death threat. That's what it is, a death threat. Why is this added to this commandment?

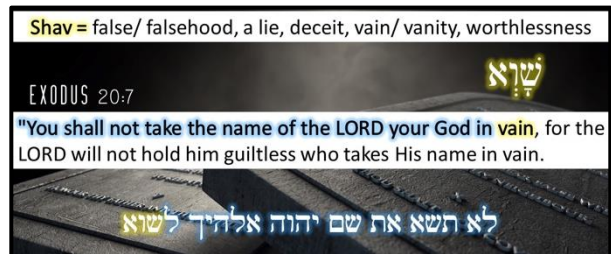
I will tell you why, and you will appreciate this as we get further into this. There is something that the Lord wants you to pay special attention to. There is a level of deception with this particular one that is frightening. You will see that. With that said, let's dig into the commandment itself.

Exodus 20:7 – <sup>7</sup> You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain (emphasis added). I think most of you know, I grew up in a conservative Christian home. My dad was really diligent about reading me Bible stories and going through Bible studies every day. Growing up and even in my 20s, my perspective and understanding of what this commandment meant is somewhat different than what I know today. Back then, I understood this commandment to refer to people using the name of Jesus, or Jesus Christ, or the name of God in a derogatory way, in the context of profanity, by cursing or by using the glorious, holy, and precious name and literally dragging it through the garbage and dirt. That was my understanding of this. So, when I heard people, as we would say, “take the Lord's name in vain”, this is what always came to my mind.

Let me be clear on something. People that use the sacred name of Jesus or Jesus Christ or God or Lord in an unholy manner, as profanity are in breach of this commandment. It fits the context of what this commandment is conveying. That is legitimately taking the Lord's name in vain, as we traditionally understand it.

But my understanding today is much broader. What God is really conveying is terrifying. We need to understand what is really being conveyed.

To do that, I am putting up the Hebrew: *lō tīśśā 'et-šēm- Yahweh 'ēlōhekā laššāw*. There's one word that we need to focus on. This one word unlocks all sorts of doors of understanding to this passage. What is that word? It is the word “vain” in English or in Hebrew it is *Sav'*. Pay close attention to that word. You will see quite a bit of it today. *Sav'*. It's what we translate as “vain”.



This is a brief definition of what this word really means: false/falsehood, a lie, deceit, vain/vanity, worthlessness. There are many different words in the English language that we could use to draw out this meaning. I could add, uselessness. I could add other words as well, but all of these words really

encompass what *Sav'* means. To further help you appreciate this word, I'm going to show it to you in action, in the sense of, I want to show you how scriptures utilize this word so you can see the context.

Beginning in Psalm 26:4 – <sup>4</sup> **I have not sat with idolatrous mortals, nor will I go in with hypocrites** (*emphasis added*). – idolatrous. Guess what in the Hebrew that word is? *Sav'*. I've not sat with “false” men. This is what's being conveyed: false men, deceitful men.

Psalm 12:2 – <sup>2</sup> **They speak idly** – “They” is referring to the wicked. The wicked speak idly. “Idly” is *Sav'*. They speak falsely. – **everyone with his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak** (*emphasis added*).

Deuteronomy 5:20, going to the Torah – <sup>20</sup> **You shall not bear false** – *Sav'* – **witness against your neighbor** (*emphasis added*). For us to really understand what God is communicating, take this in. God is saying, not to say your neighbor did “abc”, when your neighbor never did that. That's *Sav'*. You're professing one thing, but the truth is another.

Exodus 23:1 – <sup>1</sup> **You shall not circulate a false** – a *Sav'* – **report. Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness** (*emphasis added*).

You can look at the scriptural context and understand the word *Sav'* in context is falsity. Let me build on this. Earlier in this series, we looked at Josephus. He was a first century Jew, a Pharisee and a historian. His works are well known today. He actually gives his own version of the Ten Commandments. Looking at how he articulates it, you learn a lot.

This is how he records the third commandment in *Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 3.91* – **the third, that we must not swear by God in a false matter**; (*emphasis added*). Josephus being a Pharisee, therefore an expert in the law, understands exactly what *Sav'* means. It refers to false.

Targum Pseudo Jonathan, Ex 20 – **Thou shalt not swear in the name of the Lord thy God vainly; for the Lord will not acquit him who sweareth in His name with falsity**. (*emphasis added*). Over and over again, as we look at this word *Sav'*, it is a direct reference in English to falsehood.

In other words, what is being conveyed is: don't you dare go out and wrap your lie in the name of Yeshua/Jesus. Don't wrap it with the lie, “Thus says the Lord”, when the Lord has not spoken. Don't attempt to impose your will upon other people or what you feel so strongly in your heart. It's so overwhelming that this grand emotion wells up in you and what do you do? You just blurt out so that you can have credibility to your thoughts and your opinions by using the sacred name of the living God. That just opened a whole new door to understanding what it means to take the Holy name of the Lord in vain, (*Sav'*). That doesn't work.

Let's go to the book of Ezekiel because I want to show you this in action. This is really powerful. As we go through this, you will feel the weight of this. At least, I hope you do. Ezekiel 13:1-2 – <sup>1</sup> **And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,** <sup>2</sup> **“Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy** (*emphasis added*). Think about this. What is a prophet's job? A prophet has a job of prophesying. With all due respect, it is not out of line for the sheep of Israel, for the inhabitants, for the people, or for the congregation to expect the prophets to do what they were called to do.

And what are they called to do? The prophets are the shepherds. They are called to deliver the truth to Israel; to convey the heart of the Lord; to convey comfort when God wants that expressed; to convey conviction when God wants that expressed; and to deliver the Word. It is a prophet's job to convey the Word of the Lord. So, for the inhabitants to expect that, it's not out of line at all. They should be expecting it.

But you can clearly see we have a serious problem because now God is commissioning Ezekiel as a prophet to speak against the prophets of Israel. And they're prophesying. What is the problem? Check this out. Ezekiel 13:1-2 – <sup>1</sup> **And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,** <sup>2</sup> **“Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, ‘Hear the word of the LORD!’ “** (*emphasis added*). Do you understand the problem? The problem is that what these prophets are bringing to the sheep does not come from the well of the Lord, His Word and His truth that He conveyed to them. It comes from their own heart, their own emotion, and their own feelings.

We are all emotional creatures. This is where things get so scary. We seem to have very strong opinions about what we think. In fact, when we feel something, it's intense. These prophets are being moved with this intensity of emotion. They are speaking and using the good name of the Lord to cover and wrap words that only came from themselves, ideas that came from their own hearts. This is not a good situation.

Ezekiel 13:3 – <sup>3</sup> **Thus says the Lord GOD: “Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!** These prophets have seen nothing, they've heard nothing. and yet they're speaking and using the Holy name of God. And by doing that, guess what? They sanctify their own agenda. They impose their will upon people using the authority of His name.

If God truly speaks to you and you use His name to speak to others, you can rest on the authority of His name. But when you wrap that authority in your lie, in what comes from you, I don't care how emotional you are or how overwhelmed you are with that feeling in your heart, I kid you not, you have overstepped the line. That's where it gets scary.

Ezekiel 13:6 – <sup>6</sup> **They have envisioned futility** – Let's stop. What is that word in the Hebrew? *Sav'*. They've envisioned a falsehood. They've envisioned a lie. – **and false divination, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD!’ But the LORD has not sent them;** now get this and this is huge – **yet they hope that the word may be confirmed** (*emphasis added*). The word in the Hebrew for “hope” is “*yâchal*, לַחַל”. Do you know what that means? It means “to wait”. Take that in for a second. They are prophesying and are moved by emotion. They feel something so passionately that they have to convey the message. When they convey the message, they are so convinced that it is of the Lord that they step back and wait for it to unfold. Do you know how scary that is?

Think about this whole process. Especially, think about how we've seen the enemy work in regard to prophets. Listen to me carefully because what I'm about to tell you, don't ever forget. This is so huge because the perspective that many Christians have of false prophets is completely distorted. For some odd reason, when we typically think of a false prophet, we think about a man that's always been identified as a false prophet, as though they came to church with a name tag on saying, “I'm a false prophet.”

If you want any appreciation for the level of deception and examples that we have in scripture of false prophets, understand this: they are true prophets. They are true, accurate prophets that God has spoken His Word to. And guess what? They delivered it to Israel. And God spoke to them again, and they delivered it again. And guess what happened? It came to pass. And God spoke to them again, and they delivered it, but then something happened. The enemy crept in and convinced these men that what they felt in their heart and their emotions was so real that they should go ahead and speak the word because it will be just as it was the last couple times that they prophesied. The prophet got used to being in awe at whatever he said, as it came to pass.

You need to think about this prophet and how the enemy came in and twisted things up. He spoke something, and it came to pass. He spoke something again, and it came to pass. The enemy can come in through great deceit and convince the person, just speak again and guess what? The same thing's going to happen as has always happened. When a true prophet derails, it's terrifying. In that moment, he is a prophet of God until he actually stops conveying the Word of the Lord and starts conveying his own heart.

We will not get too far into this today, but if you want a perfect example of this, read Jeremiah 28. Two prophets, Jeremiah and Hananiah came to town. They were in the temple going toe to toe. Hananiah prophesied peace upon Jerusalem. He prophesied that the God of Israel was going to restore *Yerushalayim*/Jerusalem. That sounds like a God thing to me. Sounds amazing! The only problem is that Hananiah was lying. He was speaking from his own heart, but he felt it. He felt every bit of it. This was a prophet of God, not a false prophet. It's something he desired so badly that he spoke the word that Jerusalem was going to be restored.

I want to take this a step further to show you how frightening this is. Jeremiah, a true prophet that never stopped being a true prophet, heard the words of the prophet Hananiah and said, "Amen. May it be so." But it's interesting, Jeremiah added a warning that we will know that the prophet who prophesies peace is a true prophet if peace comes, but if it doesn't, then we know he's a liar. So, take heed. That's an amazing thought!

Look at the deception that swirls about with what we see happening with the prophets today. They're prophesying and, in a moment, they can derail to this overwhelming desire of their own heart, like Hananiah in Jeremiah 28. They so badly want it to be this way.

We got a boatload and an eye-full of this type of activity when people said that Donald Trump was actually going to be president even though they swore in Biden. They felt it so passionately. They spoke in the name of the Lord and said that they had a message from the Lord. There's video after video. The videos are harder to find now because they're taking them down, interestingly enough. But prophet after prophet came on the scene, feeling something so deeply, and they wanted nothing more than for this to happen, and it never happened.

Listen to me carefully. You do not want to fall into this trap. This is where you remember the death threat. The moment you step out; the moment you get bold; the moment you give into all your emotions; the moment you want to pose your will, your ideas, and your opinions on other people and say, 'Thus says the Lord. This is what the Lord has said' – Watch out because He's coming!

Ezekiel 13:7-8 – <sup>7</sup> “Have you not seen a **futile – Sav', false – vision, and have you not spoken false divination? You say, 'The Lord says,' but I have not spoken.**” <sup>8</sup> Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:



**“Because you have spoken nonsense – I love this translation of *Sav'* to nonsense. *Sav'*, spoken falsely – and you've envisioned lies, therefore I am indeed against you.” says the Lord GOD (emphasis added).**

If you want to make yourself an enemy of the Lord, start prancing around and telling people, “God told me this”, when God hasn't told you anything, but you're speaking out of the well of your own heart. And yes, your emotions are real, and those things that you're feeling are real. It takes a real believer to be able to crucify the flesh, to crucify those emotions and to display self-control and say, “I'm not going to say, ‘God said’.”

It'd be another thing for you to say. “I feel this. This is what I feel.” But don't cross that line. I wonder if there's a person in this room, even one, that has not taken the Lord's name in vain, at some point in your life. Only God knows this. Daniel doesn't know this, but if you asked me for my estimate, every single person in this room has taken His name in vain. Every single person in this room, at some point has gotten caught up in their own emotions, become overwhelmed and crossed that line.

We are going through the Ten Commandments because we need to get the dross out. There has to be true repentance where the Word is working the repentance, where the Word is convicting you, and where the Word is coming out. This gives us a chance. We have hope in Yeshua. We can have forgiveness. 1 John 1:9 – **<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.**

That's what this is about. This is about self-introspection and saying, ‘Have I done this?’ I advise you to get on your knees and say, “Lord, if I have done this, if I have abused your Holy name for the sake of my own opinion, forgive me because I don't want to be an enemy of the living God.” Christianity as a whole is so bold in saying that the Lord said this to me, and the Lord said that to me. If you're going to say that, please understand what's at stake. If you want to be that bold, and you're a true prophet, and God has truly given you a message, a Word from the Lord, then you should boldly speak it as all the prophets have.

Ezekiel 7:9 – **<sup>9</sup> My hand will be against the prophets who envision futility – *Sav'*, falsity, you will experience the hand of the living God against you – and who divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of My people, nor be written in the record of the house of Israel,** – There's a deep spiritual connotation to this statement. This is a direct reference to the Book of Life, to those who are inscribed in the Book of Life. If you cross the line and take the Lord's name in vain, you will never be written in the record of the house of Israel; you'll never be written in the Lamb's Book of Life. That puts some weight into this commandment – **nor shall they enter into the land of Israel (emphasis added).** Again, a deep spiritual connotation. It's not simply talking about you never fleshly coming into the land of Israel, as we understand it today. It's way beyond that. That's not the ultimate thing that it's talking about. It's talking about not inheriting the Kingdom of God.

We know from the book of Hebrews that Abraham dwelt as a foreigner, as a stranger, in the land of promise. Then we're told that he waited for this city, meaning the new Jerusalem, whose builder and maker is God. Then he died, not having received the promises. This is a powerful statement. You'll never get into the Kingdom of God, waiting.

Ezekiel 7:9, continued – **<sup>9</sup> Then you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.** Here's the takeaway. You have to reframe from letting your emotions get the better of you; from letting your own agenda, your own opinions, be the end of you; you have to be diligent to the Lord; you have to show a spiritual strength and say, “You know what Lord? I'm not going to say it, unless you said it.”

This gets way scarier when you think about this book, the Bible. To a degree, every single one of you operates at times as a prophet, as a priest. The prophet's job was to bring the Word of the Lord. The priest's job was to bring the Word of the Lord, to teach the people. What happens when you start teaching things out of the Bible that are total corruption of what God originally intended? What do you think is going to happen? What do you think you're going to be accused of? You are going to experience that death threat firsthand.

You don't get to say, "Thus says the Lord and let me interpret this specific passage for you." and then totally corrupt the passage. You're not going to walk away from that. You are taking the Lord's name in vain. That's what's happening.

I can give you example after example of many people I have seen fall into this. I remember this gay Christian pastor who talked about his husband and how his marriage was a gift of God. He said that the Bible proved that it was a gift because God is love and the whole biblical concept is love. So, he claimed that the Bible supported what he was doing.

Do you understand that context? That is a perfect example. Someone is taking the name of the Lord thy God in vain. They are taking the passions, emotions and desires of their own heart and wrapping them in the Holy name of Jesus. God will make good on the death threat. We cannot do this. That should make us tremble.

There's a reason that James says – <sup>1</sup> **Let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment** (James 3:1). There's too much at stake. I've told you this before, how I want to step down, I don't want the mantle, I don't want to be responsible. I'm telling you honestly, I don't want the responsibility. I do not. If I'm going to be judged stricter than you, God help me.

But this is the weight you have to feel. If you want to bring whatever you know in the Word to people, keep it in the back of your mind that you need to keep your emotions in check and what you believe in check. You can only extract what God intended. Our job when we preach the gospel or teach the Word is to give the people exactly what the Lord intended and not our own version of it. I'm sure there is a lot of repentance that needs to happen.

Check this out. 2 Chronicles 18:9 – <sup>9</sup> **(Ahab) the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, clothed in their robes, sat each on his throne; and they sat at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them.**

The king of Judah and the king of Israel came together. Prior to this, Jehoshaphat had aligned himself with Ahab by marrying his daughter. When Jehoshaphat and Ahab came together, the prophets prophesied. They were doing their thing.

2 Chronicles 18:10 – <sup>10</sup> **Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed.'** " (*emphasis added*)

The prophet Zedekiah came before them and prophesied victory, total hope in conquering the Syrians, and offered encouragement. Then it gets crazier.

2 Chronicles 18:11 – <sup>11</sup> **And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, “Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the king's hand,”** *(emphasis added)*

There were prophets all over the place. There was a testimony of more than two or three. They were all saying the same thing, “The Lord is with you. Go in the strength of the Lord.” This is about, “Thus says the Lord”. Who wouldn't want to go in the Word of the Lord? Who wouldn't want to go in the strength of the Lord?

2 Chronicles 18:12 – <sup>12</sup> **Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, “Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord – Isn't the body and the face supposed to be one accord? – encourage the king. Therefore please let your word be like the word of one of them. and speak encouragement.”** *(Emphasis added)*

Micaiah was feeling the weight of two kingdoms on him, the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah. He was feeling the weight of the messenger. The pressure was coming down on Micaiah to just conform; say what all the other prophets were saying; encourage the king and guess what? If you encourage the king, I will encourage all the children of Israel; isn't that going to be fantastic?

I love his response. 2 Chronicles 18:13 – <sup>13</sup> **And Micaiah said, “As the LORD lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak.”**

Micaiah came on the scene to hold the line. He didn't bend or break. There's much more to the story, but Micaiah told them exactly what the Lord told him: that the Lord put a lying spirit in all the mouths of these prophets, and you will be led to your destruction.

How does Micaiah get repaid for bringing the Word of the Lord? He was fed with the bread of affliction and thrown in jail. They took him away. That was his payment for doing this. But what a template when I look at this guy, to hold the line like that. Micaiah had a heart like Jeremiah, who held the line no matter how badly he wanted Jerusalem restored. Jeremiah didn't cross the line and say something the Lord never said.

Corner Fringe and the church at large needs a whole boatload of Micaiah's and Jeremiah's that don't get caught up in emotion, but fear the living God.

Returning to Ezekiel 13:22 – <sup>22</sup> **“Because with lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, so that he does not turn from his wicked way to save his life.** *(Emphasis added)*

This is what happens to prophets of God who derail and become false prophets. They cater to itching ears. They want to please the people. They want to tell the people what they want to hear, and they don't tell them what they need to hear. What do they do? They jump ship and start strengthening the hands of the people that are caught up in sin by encouraging them and saying that it's okay, you'll be fine.

Jeremiah 23:16-17 describes this perfectly – <sup>16</sup> **Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of LORD.** <sup>17</sup> **They continually say to those who despise Me, – Do you know what that means? It means those who will not keep his commandments. They are refusing to observe**

his commandments. This is important especially in the coming weeks. – ‘The LORD has said, **“You shall have peace/shalom”** ‘; and to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, **‘No evil should come upon you.’** “ (emphasis added). – They say, “It 'll be okay. Don't worry, God loves you. You will be fine. You have a problem with pornography, but you know what? A lot of people have a problem with pornography, so don't worry about it, don't beat yourself up over it, it's okay. You want to enter into an alternative lifestyle, God loves you just the way you are, in that expression.”

Do you understand how this works? It can happen with our own children when the parents do not run the hard line. They do not say the hard things because they don't want to offend their children. They don't want to push their children farther away. They don't want to say something to their parents respectfully because they don't want to ruin things.

What kind of prophets are we? This is what today is about. Yeshua says this, Matthew 7:15 – <sup>15</sup> **Beware of false prophets** – In other words, beware of men who take his name in vain – **who come to us in sheep's clothing** – They want to look like us so they pretend like they're one of us. And yes, they go to church with us. They go to Bible study, and they may even come to prayer – **but inwardly they're ravenous wolves**. – because they do exactly what Ezekiel 13:22 says: they strengthen the hands of the wicked and yet, they condemn and make sad the hands of the righteous. We live in a tipsy topsy world.

2 Peter 2:1-2 – <sup>1</sup> **But there were also false prophets among the people, even as** – listen – **there will be false teachers among you**, – If I'm going to be a false teacher and take something in the Word out of context and twist it, I am taking the Holy name of the Lord in vain. Peter says they will be among us – **who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying Yeshua who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.** <sup>2</sup> **And many** – not some – **will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.** (Emphasis added)

Do you understand when men and women feel compelled to speak out of their own emotions and out of the dictates of their own heart, pushing forward and wrapping it in the name of Jesus/Yeshua to give authority to those words and yet, God has not spoken, there are catastrophic implications on that? It's not just on the person who is deceived as Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:13 says – <sup>13</sup> **But evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.**

This is exactly what we read in the book of Ezekiel. These men are deceived, but the implications of their words don't just stay with the deceived person, it begins to affect others.

We have more to cover in regard to taking the Lord's name in vain, so we'll save the rest for next week.