

END-TIMES ISSUES



#65 Commandment #3 – Calling on God's name.

**A
N
D

B
E
Y
O
N
D
I**

1

The idols of the nations are not actual gods.

⇒ **There is only ONE God, who created all things.** All others are human inventions – meaningless and powerless.

For all the gods of the peoples are **worthless idols**, **but the LORD made the heavens.**
Psalm 96:5 (CSB)

... the nations will come ... and say,
"Our ancestors possessed nothing but **false gods**, **worthless idols** that did them **no good**.
Do people make their own gods?
Yes, but they are **not gods!**"
Jeremiah 16:19b-20 (NIV)

- Idols... made by human hands – Psalm 135:15.
- Gods who cannot save – Isaiah 45:20.
- They will someday perish – Jeremiah 10:11.

2

⇒ **We who know the true God do not have to live the lie** – living as though the others "gods" actually exist.

We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world, and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many so-called gods and lords), yet **for us there is but one God ...**
1 Corinthians 8:4–6a (BSB)

⇒ **We can acknowledge that there are spiritual forces of evil – demons – involved in the worship of these false gods.** The "gods" that the people have invented (and believe are present in the idols) don't actually exist. But the demonic forces do.

Am I saying that idols or food sacrificed to them amount to anything? No, I mean that **what the pagans sacrifice is to demons and not to God.** I do not want you to be partners with demons.
1 Corinthians 10:19–20 (NET)

3

Here are some of the contrasts between the true God and the fakes:

⇒ **The true God...**

- He spoke to the people of Israel, but he had no form – vs. 12, 15. (So don't yield to the temptation to make an idol or image.)
- He displayed his power in so many ways... no other god has ever done this. Not ever – vs. 32+.

⇒ **The gods that people invent are totally powerless.**

- They cannot see, hear, eat, or smell – v. 28.
- They are so totally opposite of what the *true* God is like.

"So remember this and keep it firmly in mind: The LORD is God both in heaven and on earth, and **there is no other.**"
Deuteronomy 4:39 (NLT)

4

⇒ **A major difference between the true God and the fakes:**

For what nation is great enough to have a god as near to them as the LORD our God is to us whenever **we call on Him?**
Deuteronomy 4:7 (BSB)

- **Our God is near to us!** We can call on him, and he answers us. **The fake gods are not capable** of responding this way.
- God has invited us to call on him – to pray – and we can be confident that he hears and will answer us.

Call to Me, and I will answer and show you great and unsearchable things you do not know.
Jeremiah 33:3 (BSB)

- This isn't just an Old Testament concept. This same type of prayer is very much a New Testament concept! Paul mentions...
... those who **call on the Lord** out of a pure heart.
2 Timothy 2:22b (BSB)

5

⇒ **Don't those who follow other gods call out to them? Don't they pray?**

- Yes, but there is a huge difference between them and us.
- **We do so with permission** from the true God. He has *invited* us to call on him – to pray. He has given us his *name*, by which we can do so. And he *does* respond, if we are calling on him with a pure heart.
- **They** first have to *invent* the god, before they can call to it (pray)!
 - **Even then**, it can't do anything. The god represented by the idol has *no ability to respond* – since it doesn't really exist.
 - **The most that can happen is nothing ... unless:**
 - ① The priests who work with the idols may have tricks they can use, to make it *appear* as though the gods are having some type of a response. Or...
 - ② The *demons* who are at work behind the scenes may have some abilities to cause something to happen.

6

⇒ In Scripture, you don't find the true God challenging the false gods to a contest of strength.

- Why would God have to prove he's better than something that *doesn't exist*?

⇒ But you do find an instance in which Elijah, a prophet of the true God, challenges the prophets of a false god.

- NOT because there was any question about the outcome. (Elijah already knew the only thing that could happen.)
- Rather, it was because he was giving the nation an opportunity to repent of wavering between following Yahweh vs. Baal.
- Behind the scenes... God was at work, preparing the people. The nation was already experiencing judgment; and their response (repentance) would enable the judgment to come to an end.*

I'M STRONGER THAN YOU!

7

Background: There would be a drought because of the nation's sin.

- King Ahab abandoned the true God (Yahweh) and worshipped false gods – 1 Kings 16:29-33. (Baal and Asherah.)
- The people wavered between following God and following the false gods – 1 Kings 18:21.
- The prophet Elijah announces that there will be a drought. (As a result, there would also be a famine, since the crops would fail.)
- True prophets had authority over kings; because their message came from God. Elijah had such authority.

Now Elijah ... said to [King] Ahab, "As surely as the LORD lives—the God of Israel before whom I stand—there will be neither dew nor rain in these years except at my word!"

1 Kings 17:1 (BSB)

- Being a true prophet, this announcement would have been made at God's direction. (If Elijah had made it up on his own, the drought wouldn't have occurred.)

8

- There was precedence for this drought.
 - God had warned Israel that drought and famine would be some of the consequences (punishments) for ongoing sin and rebellion against the true God – Leviticus 26:18-19; Deuteronomy 11:16-17; 28:23-24.
 - King Solomon acknowledged (in his prayers) that drought would be one of the consequences of sin – 1 Kings 8:35; 2 Chronicles 6:26. (This was at the dedication of the temple.)
 - The prophets mention this concept many times. (Isaiah 5:6; 30:23; Jeremiah 14:4, 22; Ezekiel 22:24; Amos 4:7; Zechariah 14:17-18; etc.) They: ① gave warnings, ② pointed it out, when it was occurring, ③ told the people to repent (which would allow the judgment to end). Their message: ④ could be a direct quote from God; ⑤ could even be a prophecy about the future.
 - The book of Revelation tells us about two prophets who will have the ability to stop the rain – Revelation 11:6.

9

- God said there would be a connection between their conduct and the weather:

If I close the sky so there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send a plague among My people, and if My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:13-14 (BSB)

 - IF: ① God judges his people and ② they repent...
 - THEN: ① God will forgive and ② stop the judgment.
- God worked through Elijah's prayer. (We can learn from this.)

Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

James 5:17-18 (NIV)

10

It was time for the drought/famine to end.

- This was about 3½ years after it started – James 5:17.
 - Elijah was at the Kerith Ravine (or Brook of Cherith) for about ½ year, and at Zarepath for about 3 years.
- God tells Elijah it is time for the drought to end. (This would happen in 1 Kings 18:41-46.)

... the word of the LORD came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the face of the earth."

1 Kings 18:1 (BSB)

However, at this point in time, there was one prerequisite that remained unfulfilled: NATIONAL REPENTANCE.

- Chapter 18 tells us how this repentance occurred.

11

- Elijah meets King Ahab – 1 Kings 18:1-16.
 - The king tries to shift the blame for Israel's problems to Elijah. (The wicked often do this type of thing.)

When Ahab saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, O troubler of Israel?"

"I have not troubled Israel," Elijah replied, "but you and your father's house have, for you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals."

1 Kings 18:17-18 (BSB)
 - In reality, Ahab was the problem.

... Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel before him.

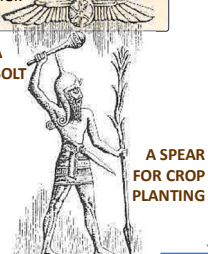
1 Kings 16:33b (BSB)

12

✓ **Preparation for the "contest"** between Elijah and the false prophets. (950 of them are mentioned in the immediate passage.)

"Now summon all Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel, along with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table."
So Ahab summoned all the Israelites and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel.

1 Kings 18:19-20 (BSB)



HOLDING A THUNDERBOLT

A SPEAR FOR CROP PLANTING

- Baal and Asherah are related gods – both part of the supposed "pantheon" of Canaanite gods.
- Baal's followers claimed that he was the god of storms and rain (among other things). He was often represented as holding a thunderbolt (⇒ fire).

- In reality, **the true God** controls the rain. *When he stopped the rain, the false god Baal was powerless to do anything about it (of course).* Ahab and the people should have paid attention to this fact!

✓ **God controlling the rain?**

- This is often mentioned, in both Old and New Testaments.
- Sometimes he sends it as a *blessing*; sometimes as a *judgment*.

... your Father in heaven ... sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matthew 5:45b (BSB)

- Many church-goers don't accept this, because they think that having a "scientific" answer for how rain forms *nullifies* all that Scripture says on this issue. Actually, the problem isn't *Scripture*, but their ignorance of how God *providentially* works in creation.

✓ **Only the true God can control the rain (as Jeremiah points out).**

ISSUES: ① There is a connection between *God* and the rain. ② *No idol* had this ability to control the weather. ③ The people would need to *repent* and have God-centered motives.

REPENTANCE → We acknowledge our wickedness, O LORD, the guilt of our fathers; indeed, we have sinned against You.

GOD-CENTERED MOTIVES (NOT SELF-FOCUSED) → For the sake of Your name do not despise us; do not disgrace Your glorious throne. Remember Your covenant with us; do not break it.

IDOLS (AND "MOTHER NATURE") ARE POWERLESS → Can the worthless idols of the nations bring rain? Do the skies alone send showers? Is this not by You, O LORD our God? So we put our hope in You, for You have done all these things.

TRUST IN GOD →

Jeremiah 14:20-22 (BSB)

✓ **The nature of the "contest":**

- This "contest" was *not* so that *Yahweh* could prove himself stronger than these other gods. *Rather, it was to give the people an opportunity to decide who they would follow.*

Then Elijah approached all the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him. But if Baal is God, follow him."
But the people did not answer a word.

1 Kings 18:21 (BSB)

- The people hadn't *totally* rejected their God, but were treating him as though he were just "one of many" gods. They would pick whichever god they thought would benefit them the most, depending on what situation they were in at the moment.

Approximately 150 years later, the people *did* totally reject God – and the consequences were destruction and exile.

✓ **The "challenge":**

"Get two bulls for us.
Let the prophets of Baal choose one bull for themselves, cut it into pieces, and place it on the wood but not light the fire.
And I will prepare the other bull and place it on the wood but not light the fire.
Then you may call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The God who answers by fire, He is God."
And all the people answered, "What you say is good."

1 Kings 18:23-24 (BSB)

- Elijah gave the followers of Baal every advantage they might want. EXCEPT he stipulated "no fire."
- It has been suggested that sometimes the prophets/priests of false gods would hide fire beneath a sacrifice, in order to deceive the people with a fake "miracle." Whether or not *these* false prophets typically practiced this, they would not do so here.

"The God/god who answers by fire"? Really??

✓ **How about BAAL?**

- Surely a god who was depicted as holding a lightning bolt would be able to send down one of his lightning bolts and start a fire!
- The answer? "Not really."

✓ **How about YAHWEH?**

- The answer? "Of course!"
- Elijah wasn't inventing an interesting challenge, just to see what might happen. *God had done this in the past, so Elijah knew that God could do it now!* (Also, he was following specific instructions given to him by God – verse 36.)
- God was often associated with fire. In fact, this is how he appeared to Moses – in a *burning* bush (Exodus 3). And it was how he spoke to Israel when he gave them the Ten Commandments – from the midst of a *fire* (Exodus 19-20).

✓ **Fire coming down from YAHWEH? YES. Consider these examples:**

- As the priests were being consecrated for service in the tabernacle:

Fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar.

Leviticus 9:24a (BSB)

- When two of the priests *violated* the necessary requirements for their consecration for service in the tabernacle:

So **fire** came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died in the presence of the LORD.

Leviticus 10:2 (BSB)

- When people rebelled during their journey through the wilderness fire came down on them – Numbers 11:1; 16:35.
- When God appeared in a visible form to Gideon, fire came from his staff, to consume Gideon's offering – Judges 6:21.

19

[MORE examples of fire from YAHWEH.]

- The "fire of God" fell from heaven and consumed a group of 50 soldiers and their captain. This happened twice – 1 Kings 1:10,12.
- Fire from heaven consumed David's burnt offerings – 1 Chronicles 21:26.
- Fire from heaven consumed Solomon's burnt offering and sacrifices, as he was dedicating the temple – 2 Chronicles 7:1, 3.
- One of Job's trials involved "the fire of God" – Job 1:16.
- A few instances are mentioned in the psalms and prophets – describing past events, possible future events (prophecy), and a few instances in which something is symbolically compared to the fire of God.
- James and John knew that God could do it. They asked Jesus if he wanted them to "call fire down from heaven" – Luke 9:54. (Jesus told them, "No!")

20

Calling on the name of one's God/god.

"Then you may **call on the name of your god**, and I will **call on the name of the LORD.**"

1 Kings 18:24a (BSB)

- ✓ **Today, this concept is foreign to many people.**

- ✓ **Back then, they all understood what this meant.**

- "Calling" on the deity's "name" was supposed to result in the deity becoming present – his *person* and his *power*. The deity would become present (in a special way) at that location and/or would perform some type of powerful act.

- ✓ **At the same time, it was quite different for the two groups.**

- For the followers of **Baal**, it was a matter of trying to get their god to do something. It might require all kinds of begging and proving that they were serious about it.



21

- For the followers of the true God (Yahweh), it was a matter of accepting the offer that God has already made for us. God has revealed himself to us, and offers to be with us (along with his power).

- ✓ **How do you use God's name in prayer?**

- Jesus tells us to *not* pray like the pagans (which would include Baal's followers).

And when you pray, **do not babble on** like pagans, for they think that by their many words they will be heard. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

Matthew 6:7-8 (BSB)

- In Christ, fellowship with God is free for the asking! **God** makes the offer! Perhaps we could compare it to this:

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him, and he with Me.

Revelation 3:20 (BSB)

22

Now back to the "contest" ...

When you trust in a god that *doesn't* exist... you should expect that the results *won't* exist!

Elijah had nothing to fear, so he gave the prophets of Baal every possible advantage.

- ✓ **"Call all you want... but all you'll hear is your own echo!"**

(From morning to noon ... no results.)

Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Since you are so numerous, choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first. Then **call on the name of your god**, but do not light the fire."

And they took the bull that was given them, prepared it, and **called on the name of Baal** from morning until noon, **shouting**, "O Baal, answer us!"

But there was no sound, and no one answered as they leaped around the altar they had made.

1 Kings 18:25-26 (BSB)

23

- ✓ **"Working yourself into a frenzy doesn't make up for the non-existence of a god!"**

(From noon to about 3 p.m. ... no results.)

At noon Elijah began to taunt them, saying, "Shout louder, for he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or occupied,* or on a journey. Perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened!"

So they **shouted louder** and **cut themselves with knives and lances**, as was their custom, until the blood gushed over them.

Midday passed, and they **kept on raving** until the time of the evening sacrifice [= approx. 3 p.m.].

But there was no response; no one answered, no one paid attention.

1 Kings 18:27-29 (BSB)

- We might be tempted to laugh at these people. But maybe we should consider some of the things we might be tempted to do, when we want God to do something.

* (Or "relieving himself" – thought by some to be a reference to taking a bathroom break.) 24

When you trust in the God who does exist... you should expect that the results will exist!

- ✓ After the false prophets spend many *hours* in a frenzied attempt to get their god to do something (and they fail), now it's Elijah's turn.

Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people approached him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been torn down.

And Elijah took twelve stones,* one for each tribe of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come and said, "Israel shall be your name." And with the stones, Elijah built an altar in the name of the LORD. Then he dug a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed.

1 Kings 18:30-32 (BSB)

* (*Twelve* stones – a reminder that it was NOT God's will for the kingdom of Israel to be divided into southern and northern kingdoms. God gave *all 12 tribes, as a unit*, the name "Israel.")

25

Elijah had nothing to fear, so he gave himself every possible disadvantage.

- ✓ Elijah totally drenches his offering and the whole area surrounding it.

- Actually, it was *the people* who did it. They would know *for certain* that there was no hidden fire to trick them.

Next, he arranged the wood, cut up the bull, placed it on the wood, and said, "Fill four waterpots and pour the water on the offering and on the wood."

"Do it a second time," he said, and they did it a second time.

"Do it a third time," he said, and they did it a third time.

So the water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.

1 Kings 18:33-35 (BSB)

26

- ✓ Elijah prays *one* time.

At the time of the evening sacrifice,* Elijah the prophet approached the altar and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and that **I am Your servant and have done all these things at Your command**. Answer me, O LORD! Answer me, **so that this people will know that You, the LORD, are God, and that You have turned their hearts back again.**"

1 Kings 18:36-37 (BSB)

- **Concerning the things Elijah did:** They were not the inventions of his own mind. *He was obeying God.*
- **His goal:** NOT to impress the people, but to turn their hearts back to God: To get them to realize that *God* (Yahweh) was all-powerful, and *the false god* (Baal) was totally powerless.

* (Evening sacrifice – about 3 p.m., sometimes a little later.)

27

The end result:

Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and it licked up the water in the trench.

1 Kings 18:38 (BSB)

- ✓ **The conclusion:**

- The fire from God was powerful enough to vaporize everything. All that was left was a depression in the ground!

- ✓ **The contrast:**

- **The 400 prophets of Baal:** Hours and hours of frenzied appeal, calling on the *name* of their god ... with absolutely no results.
- **Elijah:** One simple prayer, spoken in the *name* of Yahweh, the *true* God ... and God was immediately present and displaying his power.
 - Elijah didn't even need to *quote* the phrase "in God's name"! The entire prayer was an act of praying "in God's name."

28

- ✓ **The aftermath:** ① **Repentance, no more compromise.**
② **False prophets put to death.** This was *not* vindictive revenge, but obedience to God.

When all the people saw this, they fell facedown and said, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!"

Then Elijah ordered them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let a single one escape." So they seized them, and Elijah brought them down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered them there.

1 Kings 18:39-40 (BSB)

- Elijah had the authority to command this. As God said to Moses:
Such a prophet or dreamer **must be put to death, because he has advocated rebellion against the LORD your God**, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery; he has tried to turn you from the way in which the LORD your God has commanded you to walk. **So you must purge the evil from among you.**

Deuteronomy 13:5 (BSB)

29

- ✓ **The aftermath:** ③ **Blessings restored: Rain; the drought is over.**

- This could not happen until after the people repented – and proved it by their obedience to destroy the false prophets.
- But it was still necessary for Elijah to have a time of *intense* prayer (probably suggested by his posture), before the rain would come.

(Prayer does not always guarantee instant results.)

ELIJAH TOLD HIM TO DO THIS.

So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah climbed to the summit of Carmel, bent down on the ground, and put his face between his knees.

1 Kings 18:42 (BSB)

ELIJAH'S POSTURE WHEN HE WAS PRAYING FOR THIS.

- After this, God sent rain – vs. 43-46. Blessings restored!

30

✓ **LESSONS TO LEARN.** We do not need to be a prophet, in order to learn from Elijah's prayer.

- Elijah's prayers were based on Scripture and (being a prophet) God's direct commands. They were not fabricated, based on personal feelings, impressions or desires.
- Prayer (as well as repentance) is God-focused: The primary goal is God's honor, not personal comfort or happiness.
- To the false prophets, praying "**in god's name**" was an attempt to manipulate their god into doing something. To us, God has already made his presence and power known; and praying "**in God's name**" is asking him to accomplish *his* will by means of *his* power... whether or not we quote the phrase, "**in Jesus' name**"!
- Those Scripture passages that tell us about God's presence and power are *real* (not figurative). God may do things in different ways (under the New Covenant); but our problem tends to be *not* believing that God's presence and power are real.

31

OUR MISSION?

God has given us his name. He has promised to give us his presence and power... if we're willing to ask him "in his name"!

- ✓ He is willing to be present, so that we can obey him, and so that he will be honored. (In the New Testament, we are told that it is the *Holy Spirit* who is present in us.)
- ✓ We can freely use his name as we talk to him (prayer), talk *about* him (to others), ask him to be present with us, etc.
 ↪ **But we are to do it *only in a way that honors him.***

Next time, God willing, we'll be looking at the consequences of using God's name in any way that DOESN'T honor him. When we do that, the "negative" part of Commandment #3 applies to us.

32

✓ **WARNING!! This doesn't work:**

I'M SAVED, SO IT DOESN'T MATTER IF I TAKE GOD'S NAME IN VAIN!

⇒ If the Spirit of God were in you, *how would it be possible for you to think this way?*
How could "taking God's name in vain" not bother you?

33

Credits

SCRIPTURE

- Scriptures marked "NLT" – Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.
- Scriptures marked "NIV" - Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. (www.biblica.com)
- Scriptures marked "NET" - The Scriptures quoted are from the NET Bible® https://netbible.com copyright ©1996, 2019 used with permission from Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. All rights reserved.
- Scriptures marked "CSB" - Scripture quotations marked CSB have been taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright ©2020 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.
- Scriptures marked "BBS" – Taken from The Holy Bible, Berean Standard Bible, BSB, Public Domain (CC BY NC ND). https://bereanbible.com/

PICTURES (original sources; modifications may have been made)

- Brick wall – GDJ / CC0; via [openclipart.org: https://openclipart.org/detail/227830/brick-texture](https://openclipart.org/detail/227830/brick-texture)
- Globe with lit fuse – GDJ / CC0; via [openclipart.org: https://openclipart.org/detail/219655/political-map-earth-globe-bomb](https://openclipart.org/detail/219655/political-map-earth-globe-bomb)
- Arm wrestling – oksmith / CC0; via [openclipart.org: https://openclipart.org/detail/321156/arm-wrestling](https://openclipart.org/detail/321156/arm-wrestling)
- Baal – Louvre Museum, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:LoggBaalCartagena.JPG>

Presentation – Dennis Hinks © 2025.

34