

Names of God, Pt 2 - Jehovah

Names of God Series

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This evening we continue our series studying the names of God. And the justification for us studying the names of God was made by Charles Spurgeon when he was only 20 years old. And he began a Sunday morning sermon this way. And I would like to read this again for you this evening.

Spurgeon said:

“The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind than thoughts of God. But while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it.”

Spurgeon went on to say, “He who often thinks of God will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. The most excellent study for expanding the soul is the knowledge of the godhead. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the deity. Plunge yourself into the godhead’s deepest [?], lost in its immensity and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul, so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief, so speak peace to the winds of trial as a devout musing upon the subject of the godhead.”

And, you see, it is for these reasons that we commit ourselves to a study of the names of God. Our intent is not to learn more about God, but to learn who God is, for, ultimately, knowing who God is, as he has revealed himself to us in his names, will bring us the blessings that Spurgeon described.

Really, the premise of our summer series on the names of God is this. God has progressively revealed himself to his people by introducing himself with and identifying himself by different names and different times. God’s names were given to man by God himself during specific times of man’s need so that we might know that God is our all in

all. And as we study each of the names of God we will study them in a context where God is revealing himself to man in a time of great need.

Last week we studied God's name as revealed in Genesis chapter number one, the name אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem'). Does anybody remember this evening? I will give you a chance to interact with me now. Does anybody remember what we learned about אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem') last Wednesday evening? Who is אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem')? How would we describe him or define אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem')? Doe anybody recall?

Ok, Creator. אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem') is Creator. Thirty-two times in the first chapter of Genesis the name אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem') is found. Genesis one is not about the creation. It is about the Creator.

What else did we learn about אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem') in Genesis one? He is eternal. Very good. In the beginning...

And what else did we learn about אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem')? I am sorry? He is triune. He is trinity. And you are exactly right.

First אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem') is Creator.

“In the beginning God [or אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem')] created the heavens and the earth.”¹

He is eternal. Isaiah 40:28.

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem'), the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth.”²

And, as was mentioned, he is triune. אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem') is the masculine plural of אֵל (ale), reading from right to left and highlighted there, אֵל (ale), making provision for the triune godhead. And, of course, presenting this model here, God's name אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem') allows for the trinity of God.

Our conclusion, then, was that אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem') is the eternal, triune Creator, Genesis chapter number one.

This evening our second point of study will be the name יְהוָה (yeh-ho-vaw').

“I am יְהוָה (yeh-ho-vaw'): that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another,”³ Isaiah 42:8.

¹ Genesis 1:1.

² Isaiah 40:28.

³ Isaiah 42:8.

יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') is the Hebrew name translated capital L capital O capital R, capital D in the English translations of our Bibles and it occurs more than 5000 times in the Scriptures. It is the primary name for God used by his covenant people the Jews.

Now the name יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') is the linguistic derivative of two Hebrew verbs that express the very sense of existence. Now never mind the Hebrew that is on the screen. I want you simply to notice the English translations to be or to live. And perhaps I can illustrate it this way. If you have any understanding of the Latin language you understand that Latin is built upon a series of roots. For instance, the Latin Red *ped* means foot. You are familiar with a pedal or a pedestrian, one who walks on his feet or a podiatrist, a food doctor. Our English languages is full of Latin roots, but in Hebrew it is worst than Latin in the respect that every Hebrew word built on a three letter root. We call it a primitive root. And so God revealed himself to us, identifying and describing himself to us using the Hebrew verb, the root there to be or to live, making a statement about his existence.

Never mind the Hebrew. Look at the English there. To be or to live. And so literally the name יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') can be defined as the self existing one.

I might also mention at this point. You question why is it Jehovah or Yahweh? How does that work?

We don't know how we might pronounce the Hebrew name יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw'). The name of God went unspoken for generations out of reference to God. And in that the Hebrew alphabet consists of 22 consonants and now vowels, consequently pronunciation was heard and learned and not written or read and learned and so in this case, since it was seldom spoken we lost the original pronunciation. In time vowel points were added to aid in pronunciation and so that we could pronounce God's name either Jehovah or Yahweh, but it is really of no consequence. This name for God describes him as being the self existent one no matter how you pronounce it.

God יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') is self existing, in himself possesses light. The theological term is the aseity of God.

Now, I want us to understand the uniqueness of this name before we make application. And that could be understood here with one Jewish commentator saying this.

“All the names of God which occur in the Scripture are derived from his works except this one, יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') and this is called the plain name because it teaches plainly and unequivocally of the substance of God, the fact that he is self existent in himself.”

And that is a good statement if we care about the etymology of the name and the meaning of the name or if we want to understand the existence of God in academic terms or in a technical way. However, this is not a seminary classroom and so let us depart from some of those technicalities and let's understand, as my premise for our whole study is, that God revealed himself, the self revelation of God to man in a context so that we might

understand his person and his character. And with these names we can know him better. That is the case with the name יְהוָה (yeh-ho-vaw’).

Turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus chapter number three, the occasion when God revealed himself as יְהוָה (yeh-ho-vaw’), the self existing one. And allow me to read for us the familiar account in Exodus chapter three. It is Moses and the burning bush.

Exodus chapter three. Follow as I read verses one through 15.

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn." So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. "So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. "Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. "Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" So He said, "I will certainly 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, you shall serve God on this mountain." Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’" Moreover God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and

the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.⁴

Moses had two objections. First, Moses objected asking, “Who am I? Who am I, God?” Moses was questioning all of the liabilities and all of the limitations of man and all of the insecurities and all the inadequacies of man. Who am I?

Moses’ second objection, his second question was: “Who are you?” there in verse 13 and Moses was questioning the identity and the sufficiency of God. So we must understand that in a culture where thousands of gods were present and more new gods were being created every day—catch the word there—new gods were being created every day, how was Moses supposed to identify God and differentiate his אלהים (el-o-heem’) from all of the other gods, lower case g. What significance would another god have in Egypt, in a pluralistic, polytheistic society?

God’s answer was, “I am יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw’). I am who I am.”

And the name that God used to reveal himself to Moses in verse 14, I put it there for you in English, to be or being. The strong’s number there היה (haw-yaw). God was simply declaring his self existence to Moses. That is significant for Egyptian born and raised man Moses in a polytheistic culture.

What can we learn about יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw’) from this narrative, from the occasion when God revealed himself to Moses as יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw’)?

And this is where we discover who God is. May I suggest first יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw’) is personal. יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw’) is personal.

Verses one through four if you are glancing there at the text.

The eternal, triune Creator God, אלהים (el-o-heem’), our אלהים (el-o-heem’) of Genesis one, you will remember from last week, visited Moses, called him by name. You will see it there in verse number four, Exodus three verse four. God called to him. אלהים (el-o-heem’) called to him. The eternal, triune Creator, אלהים (el-o-heem’) of Genesis one is calling to Moses personally, inviting Moses to dialogue, to have a conversation from the burning bush.

Now, today we don’t expect God to visibly or verbally communicate with us. However, God has revealed himself to us and the general revelation of creation, Psalm 19, Romans one. They are the special revelations of the Scriptures, the person of Jesus Christ, Hebrews one, so that we might know him personally, so that the אלהים (el-o-heem’) of Genesis one, we might know personally and God calls us and he draws us to a personal relationship with him through the person of Jesus Christ.

⁴ Exodus 3:1-15.

You remember the psalmist in Psalm eight:

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, [Creator God, אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem') God] What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?⁵

How is it that אֱלֹהִים (el-o-heem') of Genesis one wants to think upon man? And then to think of the glorious love that made him to stoop to save a soul like me. יְהוָה (yeh-ho-vaw') is personal.

Second, יְהוָה (yeh-ho-vaw') is particular. Verses five and six. God is holy, holy, holy and God cannot allow a self sufficient, self willed sinful man into his presence and God has always been particular about how we approach him.

Of course, Jesus declared, “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”⁶

In this case God instructed Moses to take off his shoes for the place where he was standing was holy.

May I suggest that God is particular about the way we worship him, about the way we approach him, about thee way we address him? יְהוָה (yeh-ho-vaw') is particular.

There is at third thing. יְהוָה (yeh-ho-vaw') is present, verses seven to nine.

If you look at verses seven, eight and nine.

Verse seven, “And the LORD said: ‘I have surely seen...’”⁷

Verse eight, “I have come down...”⁸

Also in verse seven he has heard the cry. He has seen. He has heard. He has come down.

Verse nine, he has heard the cry of Israel.

God sees. God hears. God knows all of it is there in verses seven through nine. And don't ever thing for a moment that God is a million miles away. Don't ever think for a moment that God is out of touch, that he is asleep, that he is off the clock, unaware of what is happening in your life, because that is not the case. God is near. God is present.

⁵ Psalm 8:3-4.

⁶ John 14:6.

⁷ Exodus 3:7.

⁸ Exodus 3:8.

Certainly we can claim the promise that he will never leave us nor forsake us. And, in fact, that very truth would be a theme of assurance that יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') would give to Israel in their exodus from Egypt, their wilderness wandering, their conquest of the land.

“I will be with you.”

He is present.

יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') is purposeful. Look at verses 10 and 11.

“Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”⁹

God is a purposeful God. He knows what to do and he knows how to do it and he is in the business of redeeming his people. Here in this case it is Israel from slavery in Egypt. In our case it is slavery to sin. But if you study God's redemptive plan to the ages, you can come to no other conclusion than this, that God has worked specifically and strategically to accomplish his purposes. And he will. God is purposeful.

How about this one? God or יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') is patient. Verses 11 through 13 is when Moses was objecting. Who am I? Who are you? And God is patient with Moses. And God knows our tendencies to object and to question. He knows our lack of faith. He knows our inadequacies, but God is willing to use us in spite of ourselves. That is who יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') is.

Number six, יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') is powerful. Look at verses 14 through 15.

You say, “I don't see the power of God in verses 14 and 15.”

Look again. God is powerful, verses 14 and 15.

You say, “Well, I don't see it there.”

You are right. It is not there. However, what happened when Moses did go to Pharaoh in the name of יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw')?

Look at verses 14 and 15.

And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM [or יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw')]."
And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" Moreover God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham,

⁹ Exodus 3:10.

the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.¹⁰

And you see in verse 15 the capital L capital O capital R capital D יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw'). This is my name. And יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') is powerful because when Moses did go to the children of Israel and when Moses did go to Pharaoh in the name of יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw'), God's power was on display. How so? Help me. Help me. How was God's power on display when Moses went to Pharaoh?

Help me out here. The plagues, the 10 plagues, specially assaulting some of the very gods of Egypt.

יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') is powerful.

Do you recognize your God there on the screen? God revealed himself to Moses as יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw'), the self existent one. And in the context here of Moses' need saying, "Who am I? Who are you?"

God says, "Let me tell you who I am. I am יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') and I am personal. I am particular. I am present. I am purposeful. I am patient. I am powerful."

2 Chronicles 14:11.

"O יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw'), You are our אלהים (el-o-heem')."¹¹

Perhaps you are compelled this evening to ask the same question that Moses asked at the burning bush in Exodus three.

"God who are?"

Or do you know God enough so that you don't need to question his character or his call?

אלהים (el-o-heem') of Genesis one, the eternal, triune, Creator is our יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') as he revealed himself to Moses in a crisis and in the call that Moses experienced in Exodus chapter three.

Just quickly, before we spend some time in prayer together, I want to whet your appetite for the coming weeks. Last week we studied the name אל (ale), אלהים (el-o-heem'). Well, the name אל (ale) or God is used in many compound ways and you see some of those names on the screen. We are going to discover God's self revelation of himself to us in these compound names. But it is not just the compound names with אל (ale). How about these compound names?

¹⁰ Exodus 3:14-15.

¹¹ 2 Chronicles 14:11.

יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw').

And you recognize some of these. And so we have laid the foundation to discover who God is in a greater way so that we can know him in a more intimate way.

Let's pray.

Father God, our אלהים (el-o-heem'), we also address you as our יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw'), the self-existent one. Lord, we marvel that you would choose to reveal yourself to us in these ways. I thank you for your encounter with Moses at the burning bush in Exodus three. Oh, thank you, God, for giving us a glimpse of your character and your personhood in that encounter. I pray, God, that you would not just fill our minds with the knowledge of you, but our hearts with an understanding. I thank you that we might know you in a personal way through the person of Jesus Christ. Thank for this in Jesus' name. Amen.