



III. THE NAMES OF GOD

NOTE: The following passage from *The Doctrine of God* by Herman Bavinck (p.84-86) gives an excellent introduction to the importance of the names of God: “There is a very close connection between God and his name. According to Scripture also *this* connection is not an arbitrary one, but established by God himself. Men do not give him a name; he gives himself a name. God’s name is, therefore, most of all God’s *revelation* of himself whereby he actively and objectively makes himself known. Furthermore, the name of God is identical with the virtues or excellencies which he reveals outwardly: with his glory (Psalm 8:1; Psalm 72:19); honor (Leviticus 18:21; Psalm 86:11; Psalm 102:15); redeeming power (Exodus 15:3; 23:21); etc. The name is God himself as he reveals himself in one quality or another (Leviticus 24:11, 16; Deuteronomy 28:58). Hence, that name, being the revelation of God, is great (Ezekiel 36:23); holy (Ezekiel 36:20); terrible [(Psalm 99:3); holy and reverend (Psalm 111:9)]; a strong tower (Proverbs 18:10).

“By means of proper names, especially by means of the name Jehovah, God made himself known unto Israel. Through the [Angel] in whom his name abides (Exodus 23:20-21) he revealed himself to Israel. Through him he put his name upon the children of Israel (Numbers 6:27). Through him also he recorded his name among them (Exodus 20:24); put his name among them and caused it to dwell among them (Deuteronomy 16:11; Deuteronomy 12:5); especially in the temple established for his name (2 Samuel 7:13). In that temple his name now dwells (2 Chronicles 20:9; 33:4). By that name he saves (Psalm 54:1); and because of that name he cannot leave Israel (1 Samuel 12:22; Isaiah 48:9, 11; Psalm 31:3; Psalm 23:3; Psalm 143:11). Hence, Israel is forbidden to profane, desecrate, or take in vain that name (Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 18:21; Leviticus 19:12; Leviticus 24:11). On the contrary, that name must be invoked, proclaimed, exalted, made known, confessed, feared, magnified, cherished, sought, sanctified (Genesis 4:26; 12:8; Exodus 9:16; Deuteronomy 28:58; 1 Kings 8:33; Psalm 5:11; Psalm 34:3; Psalm 52:9; Psalm 83:16; Psalm 122:4; Isaiah 26:8; Matthew 6:9; John 12:28; etc.)”

“In the New Testament God’s name receives an even richer and deeper meaning; for the [Word], who was in the beginning with God and in the bosom of the Father, hath declared the Father unto us (John 1:18) and hath revealed his name (John 17:6, 26). Whereas no one knoweth the Father but the Son, only that person to whom the Son reveals the Father obtains a knowledge of God (Matthew 11:27). He who confesseth the Son hath the Father (1 John 2:23); he who hath seen him hath seen the Father (John 14:9). Hence, the name Jesus Christ guarantees our true knowledge of God as well as all the benefits connected with that knowledge.

His name is Jesus because he saves his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21): his is the only name given under heaven, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12). By his name miracles are wrought (Acts 4:7); we receive remission (Acts 2:38); the right to become children (John 1:12); and eternal life (1 John 5:13). Where two or three are gathered in his name, he is in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20). Whosoever prayeth in his name is heard (John 14:13). Whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:21)... [Believers are baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost



(Matthew 28:19).] And in the New Jerusalem an even greater revelation awaits believers (Revelation 3:12) when God's name shall be upon the foreheads of all (Revelation 22:4).

- A. Primary Names: The Old Testament uses three primary names for God. In the English, they are usually seen as God, Lord, and LORD.
1. God
 - a. Taken from the Hebrew *El, Elah, or Elohim*
 - b. The corresponding Greek is *theos*
 - c. The plural *Elohim* is often used with singular meaning as seen in places where the corresponding pronoun is plural (Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 3:22; Isaiah 6:8). This is an Old Testament indication of the trinity.
 - d. Generally refers to a *strong one* and can be used of beings other than the Almighty God (1 Corinthians 8:4-6).
 - 1) False gods (Exodus 20:3, 23)
 - 2) Devils (Deuteronomy 32:17)
 - 3) Earthly rulers (Exodus 22:28; Psalm 82:6-7)
 - e. The name, God, contains the ideas of strength and prominence (Numbers 23:22; Deuteronomy 10:17; Nehemiah 9:32; Job 36:5; Psalm 89:8; Zephaniah 3:17).
 - f. The name, God, is closely connected to creation.
 - 1) "God" is referred to 32 times in the 31 verses of the first chapter of Genesis. This is the greatest number of mentions of God in a chapter in the Bible.
 - 2) "LORD" is not mentioned until Genesis 2:4. Even here, the Bible refers to the "LORD God." "LORD" is not used by itself until Genesis 4:1.
 - 3) This shows God to be the power of creation and to have the right to rule over all creation (2 Chronicles 20:6; Daniel 5:21).
 - g. The name, God, is closely connected to His power to rule
 - 1) "God" is referred to 31 times in the 35 verses of Psalm 68. This makes Psalm 68 the chapter with the second most references to "God."
 - 2) God is connected with strength (Psalm 68:1-2, 8, 28, 34-35)
 - 3) God is connected with salvation (Psalm 68:17-20)
 - 4) God is connected with supply (Psalm 68:7, 9-10, 19)
 2. Lord
 - a. Taken from the Hebrew *Adonai*.
 - b. The corresponding Greek is *kurios*
 - c. The title Lord/lord can refer either to God or to lesser lords (Daniel 5:23; 1 Corinthians 8:5-6).
 - d. The name is written as *Lord* when referring to God and *lord* when not used as a title for God. The all-capitalized spelling, *LORD*, is used only when translated from the Hebrew *Jehovah*.



- e. Refers specifically to the master/servant relationship (Genesis 18:3; Genesis 19:2; Genesis 44:16; Exodus 4:10; Matthew 10:24; 1 Corinthians 7:22; 2 Corinthians 4:5).
 - f. First used as a title for God in the compound “Lord GOD” in Genesis 15:2, 8. First used alone as a title for God in Genesis 18:3. Notice the servant/master relationship in this passage. The primary concept found in the title Lord is that God is our owner and master and we are his servants. At the time of his conversion, Paul prayed, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). That is the essence of what it means to say that God is our Lord.
 - g. The personal nature of this title is seen in the frequent use of the personal pronoun with it. The Lord is “my Lord” (Exodus 4:10; Judges 6:13; Psalm 16:2; Psalm 110:1). He is also “our Lord” (Psalm 8:1; Psalm 135:5) as is Jesus Christ (Romans 1:3; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 1:9; Ephesians 5:20). By way of contrast, the phrases “my LORD” and “our LORD” are never used in the Bible.
 - h. The Lordship of God demands obedience and submission from the Master’s servants. However, it also implies the watchcare of the Lord over His subjects (Psalm 39:7; Psalm 40:17; Psalm 68:19-20; Psalm 86:3-5).
 - i. A great illustration of lordship is found in Isaiah 6. In the year that Isaiah lost his earthly lord, he saw a vision of his heavenly Lord (Isaiah 6:1). This Lord is identified as the King, the LORD of hosts, and He is holy, holy, holy (Isaiah 6:3-5). Then, as “Lord,” He commissions Isaiah to take the message of God to the people (Isaiah 6:8-9) and He gives him the length of his commission (Isaiah 6:11). Compare these verses with those that refer to the LORD (Isaiah 6:3, 5, 12).
3. LORD
- a. Translated from the Hebrew *Jehovah*
 - b. In the Old Testament, Jehovah is generally translated as LORD with all capital letters. In some compound titles (as Lord GOD), it is translated as GOD (to avoid a title such as Lord LORD).
 - c. In seven verses in the King James Bible, the Hebrew is transliterated as Jehovah.
 - 1) In verses where a special significance is given to the name Jehovah:
 - a) Exodus 6:3 – “*And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.*”
 - b) Psalm 83:18 – “*That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.*”
 - 2) In verses where a compound form of Jehovah is used:



- a) Genesis 22:14 – “*And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.*”
- b) Exodus 17:15 – “*And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi:*”
- c) Judges 6:24 – “*Then Gideon built an altar there unto the LORD, and called it Jehovahshalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.*”
- 3) In verses where a double form of Jehovah is used:
 - a) Isaiah 12:2 – “*Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.*”
 - b) Isaiah 26:4 – “*Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.*”
- d. It is transliterated once in the shorter form of JAH: Psalm 68:4 – “*Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.*”
- e. The name is seen in the shorter form of *jah* in Hallelujah which means “Praise ye the LORD.”
- f. The source of the name
 - 1) Comes from four Hebrew consonants. Often called by Bible scholars the Tetragrammaton, meaning the four-lettered name.
 - 2) Unpronounced by the Jews for centuries. They did this in extension to the warnings against blaspheming the name of the Lord (Leviticus 24:16).
 - 3) It has the same vowel markings as Adonai. Therefore, when the Jewish scribes copied scripture, they would write *Jehovah* but say *Adonai*.
- g. The pronunciation of Jehovah is disputed by modern scholarship. They have changed Jehovah to Yahweh. However, this is not the settled *fact* that it is claimed to be. John M. Frame, in *The Doctrine of God* (p.36-37), says of this name of God: “Its pronunciation is problematic, too. At an early point in the transmission of the Bible, the Jews decided that God’s name was too holy to be uttered, and so they replaced it in Scripture reading with ‘*adonay* [*Adonai*], which means ‘Lord.’ Because the vowel points of ‘*adonay* were superimposed on the consonants of the sacred name in the Hebrew text, we cannot be sure what the original vowels were, but most scholars have settled on *Yahweh* as the original Hebrew word. The older English name Jehovah (used, for example, in the American Standard Version of 1901 [and in the King James Bible]) follows the Hebrew text as it literally appears.” Therefore, *Jehovah* is the literal rendering of what is in the Hebrew text while *Yahweh* is a guess by the scholars.
- h. The ASV of 1901 consistently left Jehovah in the text. However, the King James Bible normally uses LORD. This name is found almost 6500 times in the Old Testament. It is used more than any other name



for God. There are several reasons the Bible translates Jehovah to LORD.

- 1) It avoids creating an Old Testament God not found in the New Testament.
 - 2) It follows the practice of the Jewish scribes in using Lord for LORD.
 - 3) It follows the practice of the New Testament in using the Greek kurios (meaning Lord) in quoting Old Testament references to Jehovah (compare Matthew 3:3 with Isaiah 40:3; compare Matthew 4:7 with Deuteronomy 6:16; Matthew 22:37 with Deuteronomy 6:5).
- i. Jehovah is the unique name of God. Other names, like God and Lord, may be used at times of other beings (1 Corinthians 8:5); but Jehovah is the name that refers only to the God of the Bible (Psalm 83:18).
- j. Jehovah is primarily the self-sufficient God. He is the source of His own existence. He is independent of all other existence and would be Himself even if nothing else existed.
- 1) He revealed Himself to Moses as the great I AM (Exodus 3:13-15). He calls Himself, I AM THAT I AM. This is an identification of who the LORD is.
 - 2) According to John 5:26, *"the Father hath life in himself."* That is, the life of God comes from God. According to John 5:26, *"the Father hath life in himself."* That is, the life of God comes from God.
 - 3) Of Him scripture declares, *"Who only hath immortality"* (1 Timothy 6:16). Only God has full control over His own existence.
 - 4) God powerfully proclaims His own existence in Deuteronomy 32:40 - "For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever." Coming from anyone other than God, this would be the ravings of a madman. From God, it is simply the truth.
 - 5) Seven times in the Bible, God declares Himself to be the first and the last (Isaiah 41:4; Isaiah 44:6; Isaiah 48:12; Revelation 1:11, 17; Revelation 2:8; Revelation 22:13). Nothing came before Him and nothing will exist beyond Him.
 - 6) Thirty times the scriptures refer to him as the *"living God"* (Deuteronomy 5:26 [first reference]; 1 Samuel 17:36; Psalm 42:2; Jeremiah 10:10; Jeremiah 23:36; Daniel 6:20; John 6:69; 2 Corinthians 3:3; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Timothy 4:10; Revelation 7:2 [last reference]).
- k. Since the LORD is the only true (the unique) God and the self-sufficient God, He is also the Redeemer God (Exodus 6:6; Deuteronomy 7:8; Deuteronomy 21:8; 2 Samuel 4:9; Psalm 19:14; Isaiah 43:14; Isaiah 44:24; Isaiah 47:4; Isaiah 63:16). This trinity of meaning reveals the significance of the name LORD.
- 1) The only true God (Psalm 83:18)



- 2) The living God (Jeremiah 10:10) – the great I AM (Exodus 3:14)
 - 3) The Redeemer (Isaiah 47:4)
 1. God is not fully known as LORD until the one knowing Him has experienced redemption by Him. This explains the significance of Exodus 6:1-8. The patriarchs knew the name JEHOVAH, but they did not truly know Him by that name. They knew, or experienced, Him as God Almighty (Genesis 17:1; Genesis 28:3; Genesis 35:11), as the God who proved Himself mighty in provision and protection. However, it was only after the bondage of Egypt and the deliverance from that land to the land of promise by their Redeemer that they could truly know Him as LORD. Only those who have been redeemed from bondage can fully know God as LORD. Not only was He revealed as such to Israel (Exodus 6:3); He offers this revelation of Himself to all men (Psalm 83:18).
- B. Names Compounded with God [The following list is not comprehensive. However, it contains the most common titles, other significant titles, and examples of several descriptive titles. Each of these titles could be studied in depth in order to understand the fullness of God’s revelation of Himself in that title. This demonstrates that the study of God can be a lifelong work.]
1. Almighty God or the Almighty
 - a. Scripturally, the title is used in several contexts.
 - 1) This is the name by which God revealed Himself to Abraham and the patriarchs (Genesis 17:1; Genesis 28:3; Genesis 35:11; Genesis 43:14; Genesis 48:3; Exodus 6:3). In these passages, the Almighty God is the One who blesses and provides for His chosen people (Genesis 17:1-2; Genesis 28:3; Genesis 35:11; Genesis 48:3; Genesis 49:25). Evidently, the all-mightiness of God refers to His ability to help His people who look to Him.
 - 2) Balaam’s vision of blessing for the children of Israel is called “the vision of the Almighty” (Numbers 24:4, 16).
 - 3) God is called the Almighty 31 times in the book of Job (Almighty in reference to God is only found 57 times in the entire Bible).
 - a) Job is believed to be one of the oldest books written in the Bible. Some have placed Job as early as the time of Abraham, making him a contemporary of Abraham. While others have placed him later. Much consideration can be placed with the latter as the name Job is found in the book of Genesis (Genesis 46:13). Also, many of Job’s friends are found in the book of Genesis at a later date. For instance...
 - i. Eliphaz (Genesis 36:4, 10)
 - ii. Bildad (Genesis 25:2, 6).
 - iii. One also finds the city of Naamah mentioned in the book of Joshua, which is likely where Zophar came from (Joshua 15:20-21, 41; compare to Job 2:11).