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THE NAMES AND TITLES OF GOD

*“Neither is there salvation in any other:
for there is none other name under heaven
given among men, whereby we must be saved”
(Acts 4:12).*

Even though we cannot fully comprehend God, God has employed several methods to reveal Himself to us. One of these methods is the use of different names or titles to identify Himself.

The Significance of a Name

The use of names in Bible times, especially in Old Testament times, carried much more significance than it does in our day. People often used names to reveal something about the characteristics, history, or nature of individuals, and God did too. Thus, God

changed the name of Abram (meaning exalted father) to Abraham (father of a multitude), and the name of Jacob (heel catcher, supplanter) to Israel (he will rule as God). Even in the New Testament, Jesus changed the name of Simon (hearing) to Peter (a rock). The Amplified Bible quotes in a footnote on I Kings 8:43 from *Davis Dictionary of the Bible*, *Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, and *The New Bible Dictionary* to point out the significance of the name of God: "To know the *name* of God is to witness the manifestation of those attributes and apprehend that character which the name denotes. . . . God's *name*, that is, His self-revelation . . . The name signifies the active presence of the person in the fullness of the revealed character." Baylor University professors Flanders and Cresson stated: "To the ancients the name is a part of the person, an extension of the personality of the individual."¹

God used names as a means of progressive self-revelation. For example, in Exodus 6:3 God said, "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 unto them." Verses 4 through 8 make clear that the significance to Israel of the name Jehovah was its association with redemption and salvation. We know that Abraham did use the name Jehovah (Genesis 22:14); however, God did not make known to him the full significance of this name in its redemptive aspect. So, in Exodus 6:3 God promised to reveal Himself to His people in a new way. That is, He began to associate His name with a new understanding of His character and attributes.

In addition to using names to manifest His character, God used His name to manifest His presence. At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon acknowledged that God was omnipresent and that no temple could contain Him (I Kings 8:27). Since God fills the universe, Solomon asked how the Temple, a man-made structure, could contain God. Then he answered his own question by reminding God of His promise: “My name shall be there” (I Kings 8:29). Although God’s omnipresence could not be confined to the Temple, yet the fullness of His character as represented by His name could dwell there.

Solomon went on to pray “that all people of the earth may know thy name” (I Kings 8:43). Once again, this statement links the name of God with a revelation of His character. God Himself used the concept of His name to represent the revelation of His nature and power. He told Pharaoh, “And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth” (Exodus 9:16).

The name of God represents His authority as well as His power. For example, He invested His name in the angel that led the Israelites (Exodus 23:21). This angel was probably a theophany of God since the passage expresses the idea that the angel acted with all the authority of God Himself.

God’s name represents the following: (1) God’s presence, (2) the revelation of His character, (3) His power, and (4) His authority.

Here are some other points that show the importance God places upon His name:

1. God demands fear (reverence, respect) for His name (Deuteronomy 28:58-59). He commands people not to take His name in vain (Exodus 20:7).

2. God warns His people not to forget His name (Psalm 44:20-21; Jeremiah 23:25-27).

3. God promises a blessing for those who know His name (Psalm 91:14-16). There is a blessing for those who think upon His name (Malachi 3:16).

With the significance of the name in mind, let us examine some names used for God in the Old Testament.

Names or Titles of God in the Old Testament

Below is a list of the primary words used to designate God in the Old Testament.²

Old Testament Names for God

English	Hebrew	Example of Scripture
1. God	Elohim	Genesis 1:1
2. God	El	Genesis 14:18
3. God	Eloah	Nehemiah 9:17
4. God	Elah (Aramaic form)	Daniel 2:18
5. GOD	YHWH (Yahweh)	Genesis 15:2
6. LORD	YHWH or YH	Genesis 2:4
7. JEHOVAH	YHWH	Exodus 6:3
8. JAH	YH (Yah)	Psalms 68:4
9. Lord	Adon	Joshua 3:11
10. Lord	Adonai	Genesis 15:2
11. I AM THAT I AM	Eheyeh asher Eheyeh	Exodus 3:14
12. I AM	Eheyeh	Exodus 3:14
13. Most High God	EI-Elyon	Genesis 14:18

English	Hebrew	Example of Scripture
14. The God of sight	El-Roiy	Genesis 16:13
15. Almighty God	El-Shaddai	Genesis 17:1
16. Everlasting God	El-Olam	Genesis 21:33

El means strength, mighty, almighty, or, by extension, deity. Eloah is probably derived from El and always refers to deity. Elah is the Aramaic (Chaldean) form of Eloah. Elohim is the plural form of Eloah, and the Old Testament uses this word more than any other to mean God. In this case, the Hebrew plural is an intensive form denoting the greatness, majesty, and multiple attributes of God. (See chapter 7.) The Bible also uses the word *elohim* to refer to false gods (Judges 8:33), spirit beings (I Samuel 28:13), and human rulers or judges (Psalm 82). In these cases it is translated “god” or “gods.” Adon means ruler, master, or lord, whether human, angelic, or divine. Adonai is the emphatic form of Adon and specifically refers to the Lord (God).

Yahweh (Jehovah) is the redemptive name of God in the Old Testament (Exodus 6:3-8) and the unique name by which the one true God distinguished Himself in the Old Testament from all other gods (Isaiah 42:8). It means the Self-Existing One or the Eternal One. This concept also appears in the phrases “I AM THAT I AM” and “I AM,” used by God of Himself. Flanders and Cresson explained that Yahweh is the third person form of the verb “to be” in Hebrew.³ Yahweh means “He is.” When used by God, the verb form is in the first person, or “I Am.” In other words, Yahweh and “I

Am” are different forms of the same verb. Furthermore, both connote an active (possibly causative or creative) existence rather than just a passive existence.

In the English, Jah appears once in the KJV as an abbreviation for Jehovah (Psalm 68:4). Jehovah appears by itself only four times in the KJV (Exodus 6:3; Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 12:2; Isaiah 26:4) and only three times as part of a compound name (Genesis 22:14; Exodus 17:15; Judges 6:24). In every other place, the King James translators used GOD or LORD (large and small capitals) to represent YHWH or its abbreviation YH. In most cases they used LORD (example: Genesis 2:4), using GOD only when Adonai (Lord) also appeared in the same phrase (example: Genesis 15:2).

In using LORD as a substitute for YHWH, they were simply following an ancient Jewish tradition of substituting Adonai for YHWH when copying or reading the Scriptures. This custom arose because the Jews wanted to safeguard against taking God’s name in vain, which would violate the third commandment (Exodus 20:7). They felt that by constantly repeating the sacred name of God they might begin to treat it too casually and lightly. The name of God was so holy and sacred that they did not feel worthy to use it.

Jesus and the apostles also followed this custom. The New Testament uses the Greek word *kurios*, meaning Lord, when quoting Old Testament Scriptures containing YHWH (Matthew 3:3; 4:7, etc.).

Since ancient Hebrew did not use written vowels and since the Jews stopped speaking the sacred name, no one knows what the original pronunciation of YHWH was. All we have are the four Hebrew

letters (called the tetragrammaton), which are usually transliterated as YHWH or JHVH and pronounced Yahweh (Hebrew) or Jehovah (English). We will use Jehovah in the rest of the book to conform to traditional English and KJV usage.

Compound Names of Jehovah

In addition to the above designations for God, the Old Testament uses a number of compound names of Jehovah to describe God and to reveal Him further. They are listed in the table below.⁴ Numbers 1, 3, and 5 appear as such in most English versions; the rest appear in the Hebrew but are translated in the English. Moreover, the New Testament uses “the Lord of Sabaoth” twice (Romans 9:29; James 5:4).

Compound Names of Jehovah

Name	Scripture	Meaning
1. Jehovah-jireh	Genesis 22:14	The LORD will see (i.e., will provide)
2. Jehovah-rapha	Exodus 15:26	The LORD that heals
3. Jehovah-nissi	Exodus 17:15	The LORD our banner (i.e., victory)
4. Jehovah-m'kaddesh	Exodus 31:13	The LORD that sanctifies
5. Jehovah-shalom	Judges 6:24	The LORD our peace
6. Jehovah-sabaoth	I Samuel 1:3	The LORD of hosts (i.e., almighty)
7. Jehovah-elyon	Psalms 7:17	The LORD most high
8. Jehovah-raah	Psalms 23:1	The LORD my shepherd

Name	Scripture	Meaning
9. Jehovah-hoseenu	Psalm 95:6	The LORD our maker
10. Jehovah-tsidkenu	Jeremiah 23:6	The LORD our righteousness
11. Jehovah-shammah	Ezekiel 48:35	The LORD is present

The Progressive Revelation of the Name

We find that in the Old Testament God progressively revealed more about Himself as various needs arose in the lives of people, and He used names to express this self-revelation. When Abraham needed a lamb to sacrifice, God revealed Himself as Jehovah-jireh, the LORD that provides. When Israel needed deliverance, God revealed that His name Jehovah had a previously unknown significance with respect to deliverance and salvation (Exodus 6:3-8). When Israel needed protection from disease and sickness, God revealed Himself as Jehovah-rapha, the LORD that heals. When Israel needed victory over enemies, God revealed Himself as Jehovah-nissi, the LORD our banner, i.e., victory. Thus, the names and titles described above all reveal important aspects about the nature of God.

However, none of them is a complete revelation of God's nature. Many people in the Old Testament realized this; they desired to know more of God and expressed their desire by asking to know His name. When Jacob wrestled with the man at Peniel (a manifestation of God), he asked, "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name." God did not reveal His name but did bless him

(Genesis 32:29). Manoah, the father of Samson, asked the angel of the LORD what his name was and received this reply: “Why asketh thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?” (Judges 13:18). The prophet Agur asked, “What is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?” (Proverbs 30:4). If he referred to God, then he was looking into the future, trying to see by what name God would reveal Himself when He would appear as the Son. Zechariah prophesied that a time would come when the LORD would be king over all the earth, and “in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one” (Zechariah 14:9).

The Name Jesus

When the fullness of time came, God did satisfy the longings of His people and revealed Himself in all His power and glory through the name Jesus. Jesus is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name variously rendered as Jehoshua (Numbers 13:16), Jeshua (Ezra 2:2), or Joshua (Exodus 17:9). Both Acts 7:45 and Hebrews 4:8 show that Jesus is the same name as Joshua. (See NIV.)

Jesus means Jehovah-Savior, Jehovah our Salvation, or Jehovah is Salvation.⁵ This is why the angel said, “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). The identification of the name Jesus with salvation is particularly evident because the Hebrew for Jeshua is practically identical to the Hebrew for salvation, especially since ancient

Hebrew did not use written vowels. In fact, Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance* transliterates Jeshua as Yeshuwa and the Hebrew word for salvation as Yeshuwah. Although others have borne the name Jehoshua, Joshua, or Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only One who actually lived up to that name. He is the only One who is actually what that name describes.

Jesus is the culmination of all the Old Testament names of God. It is the highest, most exalted name ever revealed to humanity. (See chapter 4 for proof that Jesus fulfills all the eleven compound names of Jehovah given above.) The name of Jesus is the name of God that He promised to reveal when He said, "Therefore my people shall know my name" (Isaiah 52:6). It is the one name of Zechariah 14:9 that encompasses and includes all the other names of God within its meaning.

The New Testament church is identified by the name of Jesus. In fact Jesus said we would be hated among all people for His name's sake (Matthew 10:22). The early church was persecuted for the name of Jesus (Acts 5:28; 9:21; 15:26), and they considered it a privilege to be counted worthy to suffer for His name (Acts 5:41). Peter stated that the lame man at the Gate Beautiful was healed "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" (Acts 4:10). He then explained the supremacy and necessity of this name in receiving salvation: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The apostle Paul wrote, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted

him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth” (Philippians 2:9-10).

Because of the exalted position of this name, we are exhorted to rely upon the name of Jesus in all we do or say: “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Colossians 3:17). We teach and preach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:17-18; 5:28). We cast out devils, speak in tongues, receive supernatural power and protection, and pray for the sick—all in the name of Jesus (Mark 16:17-18; James 5:14). Signs and wonders are done by the name of Jesus (Acts 4:30). We pray and make requests known to God in the name of Jesus (John 14:13-14; 16:23). We gather together in the name of Jesus (Matthew 18:20). We baptize in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38).

Does this mean the name of Jesus is a kind of magical formula? No. For the name of Jesus to be effective we must have faith in His name (Acts 3:16). We must know and have faith in the One represented by that name (Acts 19:13-17). The name of Jesus is unique because unlike any other name it represents the presence of its owner. It represents God’s presence, power, and work. When we speak the name of Jesus in faith, Jesus Himself is actually present and begins to work. The power does not come from the way the name sounds, but it comes because the utterance of the name in faith demonstrates obedience to the Word of God and faith in the work of Jesus. When we call His name in faith, Jesus manifests His presence, performs the work, and meets the need.

Through the name Jesus, therefore, God reveals Himself fully. To the extent that we see, know, honor, believe, and receive Jesus, to that extent we see, know, honor, believe, and receive God the Father (John 5:23; 8:19; 12:44-45; 13:20; 14:7-9). If we deny Jesus, we deny the Father (I John 2:23), but if we use the name of Jesus we glorify the Father (Colossians 3:17).

The Bible foretold that the Messiah would declare the name of the LORD (Psalm 22:22; see Hebrews 2:12). Jesus asserted that He had manifested and declared the name of the Father (John 17:6, 26). In fact, He inherited His name from the Father (Hebrews 1:4). How did Jesus manifest and declare the Father's name? He did so by unveiling the meaning of the name through the works that He did, which were the works of Jehovah (John 14:10-11). Just as God in the Old Testament progressively revealed more about His nature and His name by responding to the needs of His people, so in the New Testament Jesus fully revealed the nature and name of God through miracles, healings, casting out of demons, and forgiveness of sins. Jesus declared the Father's name by His works; for by them He proved that He was indeed the incarnation of the Father, the Jehovah of the Old Testament. (See Isaiah 35:4-6 with Luke 7:19-22.) By demonstrating the power of God in accordance with the prophecies, He proved that Jesus was the name of the Father.

Why is the name of Jesus the full revelation of God? Simply because Jesus is Jehovah and in Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, including the role of Father (Colossians 2:9). We will study this great truth in chapter 4.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 3

¹Henry Flanders, Jr. and Bruce Cresson, *Introduction to the Bible* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973), 61.

²Definitions and spellings are from Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance*.

³Flanders and Cresson, 79.

⁴See Francis Derk, *The Names of Christ*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1969) 152-53; Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance*.

⁵Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (1887; rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 1:16; W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1940), 274.