

God's Revelation of Himself in His NAMES: Fundamentals and First Revealed Name

INTRODUCTION:

1. There is a very old children's rhyme that first appeared in 1862 and was reworded slightly in 1872 to say, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never harm me."
 - A. We've all heard it and as parents may have mentioned it to our kids. But it just isn't true.
 - B. Names matter because they are given by others to describe us, to define us, good or bad!
2. Though we mostly choose names today based on their sound, that someone's name still matters is proven by simply mispronouncing someone's name or calling them the wrong name.
3. We want to *protect our name*, so it isn't used in a way that is contrary to our character and wishes.
 - A. If someone says, "Rodney said, believes, teaches...", all the sudden I am very interested, seeing my name connects me, my character, etc., to whatever follows!
 - B. Identity theft matters because people take my "good name" that I have established and use it illegitimately for their own evil purposes, and not as I desire.
4. Names matter to God so much so that He changed people's names to reflect their new reality.
 - A. Abram, or "exalted father," was changed to Abraham, or "father of a multitude."
 - B. Jesus said to Simon, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone)." (John 1:42). And there are others!
 - C. Even our names can reflect a change in our reality!
 - i. When a woman takes the man's last name at marriage, she is agreeing to align herself and her identity with the man she loves.
 - ii. We give nicknames to reflect realities, like calling someone "slim."
5. Biblical names often define that person, being equivalent to that person and their reality.
 - A. When Jesus said in John 17:26, "I made known to them **your name**, and I will continue to make it known," Jesus wasn't talking about sounds, but who God is in heart, mind, will, and deed!
 - B. Not surprisingly, God has revealed to us His various names that reflect the many ways He relates to humanity and affects our reality.
 - C. Knowledge of those names and their significance help us to comprehend God and understand how He is to affect our reality.
6. My aim in this series is to expand our knowledge and appreciation of God by examining His revealed names and their significance in our reality as His people.

BODY:

I. Fundamental observations concerning God's names as revealed in Scripture:

- A. To speak of God's "name" is to who God is, all that He is, including all His names.
- B. God's name...
 1. Declares His majesty and glory (Psa. 8:1 – "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens." – ESV).
 - a. That God's name is *majestic* means it is magnificent, excellent, full of splendor.
 - b. His name is to be treated with infinitely greater respect than any other name!
 2. Is to be hallowed (Matt. 6:9 – "In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.").
 - a. Hallowed means holy, sanctified, set apart—not to mixed with what is common!
 - b. Too many, unknowingly, strip His name of holiness and sanctity when it is invoked in slang, surprise, or anger as "Oh my God," (OMG), "Oh my Lord," "God," etc.
 - c. When God's names aren't handled the way they should be, He doesn't take that lightly!
 3. Can be taken in vain.
 - a. Remember how people get upset if their name is used in a way that is contrary to their character, or who they are? Well, God gets very upset when people do that to Him—when they take His name in vain!

- b. Taking His name in vain *goes further* than someone cursing or saying, “Oh my God!”
 - i. The Devil used God’s name in vain when he mentioned it *for His own purpose* of tempting Eve to disobey God (Gen. 3:1 – “Has God said, ‘You shall not...’”).
 - ii. It happens whenever His name is applied to that which is contrary to His will (Matt. 7:21-23 – “Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, **but he who does the will of My Father** in heaven.”²² Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied **in Your name**, cast out demons **in Your name**, and done many wonders **in Your name**?’²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”).
 - iii. It happens when people reject God as He has *defined Himself in His revelation* to create a god of their own desires, who thinks and acts as they would have him to!
 - 1) For, that is nothing more than attaching God’s name to an idol of our creation!
 - 2) God has revealed Himself so we can know Him as He is, not as we want Him to be!
- 4. Is to be feared (Psalm 86:11 – “Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to **fear Your name.**”)
 - a. I don’t think this is saying that God wants His people to draw back in terror at His name.
 - b. Yet, God is not to be viewed as our “buddy,” seeing His names present a character and nature that demands our complete praise, honor, reverence, and obedience!
 - c. True fear of God’s name cannot be separated from accepting and obeying His word (Deut. 28:58-59 – “If you do not carefully **observe all the words of this law** that are written in this book, **that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD,**⁵⁹ then the Lord will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues...”).
 - d. Only when we know God as He has revealed Himself can we properly fear God and do as David exhorted saying, “**Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name**” (Psa. 29:2).
- C. God’s names must be known and respected because they are His “branding,” if you will, of himself to mankind.
 - 1. A “brand” is more than a logo, slick marketing statement, etc. It is what a person thinks of when he/she hears that company’s name—it’s product quality, customer service, ethics, etc.
 - 2. God has “branded” Himself in His names, choosing those that have substance beyond their sound relating to His character qualities, promises, assurances, actions, etc.!
 - a. It is like Apple, Ford, Toyota, etc., that market their name to create a certain perception and emotion in the minds of the consumer (i.e., quality, innovation, etc.).
 - i. Millions of dollars and countless manhours are spent each year to get that name into your mind...and your heart...and your emotions.
 - ii. This is why they so closely guard their name against unauthorized us, seeing it could present their name in a light inconsistent with their company’s character.
 - b. God’s names are designed to help us perceive God, to know who He is, and enter our hearts and emotions as they reveal His nature and His desired relationship with us.
 - 3. While God warns us against misapplication and abuse of His name with serious penalties, because of His great love for us He has chosen to make His name vulnerable to such abuses by allowing us to wear and use His name, even in vain if we so choose.
 - 4. But understand that there is purpose, power, and authority behind God’s names, and those who abuse and misuse them will answer to that power and authority one day!

II. The First revealed name of God – Elohim, the Strong Creator God

- A. Elohim is revealed as God’s name in the first verse of the Bible amidst the creation account (Gen. 1:1 – “In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth.”).

1. In doing so God chose to reveal a most excellent characteristic of Himself—He, Elohim, is the **Powerful Creator**—the One to whom all things owe life and existence!
 2. Although El is one of the oldest designations for divinity and was borrowed by the Hebrew language to speak of God, Elohim, which is its *plural* form, became a go-to name for God in Judaism and used around 2500 times in O.T.
 - a. Its *plurality* does not suggest belief in many gods (Deut. 6:4 – “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God [Elohim] *is* one LORD.”).
 - b. Instead, it emphasizes the multifaceted power of the one true God, much like the *royal we* of kings and queens—that He is God of gods! (Deut. 10:17 – “For the LORD your God [Elohim] *is* God [Elohim] of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe.”)
 - c. This oneness and power of the *plural* Elohim is seen in creation when God said, “Let Us make man in **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness...” (Gen. 1:26), but not fully revealed until the N.T. (Matthew 28:19 – “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the **name** of the **Father** and the **Son** and the **Holy Spirit**”).
- B. What does the revelation of name *Elohim*, the Powerful *Creator*, tell us about God?
1. God’s introduction of Himself as *Elohim the Creator* intends to impress upon us the greatness of His power.
 - a. In the account of creation from Gen. 1:1 to Gen. 2:3, Elohim is the only name to which that amazing power of creation is ascribed!
 - i. Chapter one repeated states: “Then God [Elohim] **said**,...and **it was so**” (1:3, 6-7, 9, 11, 14-15, 20-21, 24, 26-27).
 - ii. Elohim, the Strong One, simply **spoke** all things, everywhere, into existence! (Heb. 11:3 – “By faith we understand that the **worlds were framed by the word of God**, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”).
 - iii. God took *nothing* and created *everything*—the universe—that seemingly infinite space filled with some 1-200 billion galaxies, each having billions of stars!
 - b. As *Powerful Creator* God has infinite resources to accomplish His purposes in this universe and in our lives!
 - i. Why do we doubt the **Creator’s** ability to work out our lives for our eternal good?
 - ii. For, when Sarah doubted that God could give her a child, God replied, “Is anything too difficult for the Lord?” (Gen. 18:14)
 - iii. This should assure us that our faith and service to Him are not for naught!
 - c. We should trust Elohim, the Powerful Creator...
 - i. When you feel weak, totally lacking in what is needed to meet life’s challenge (Isa. 40:28-29 – “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God [Elohim], the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. ²⁹ He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength.”)
 - ii. When fear fills your heart (Isa. 41:10 – “Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God [Elohim]. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”).
 - iii. Too often we get hung up trying to figure out the answer to our problems rather than looking to God in faith to see how **He** will straighten things out, fix our problems, allay our fear, seeing Elohim can *create* something even out of nothing!
 2. God is *distinct from His creation*, being above and separated from it.
 - a. That may sound bad, like I am saying God is cold and distant, but I am not.
 - b. It means that Elohim as *Creator* is separate in nature from the finite, corrupting nature of creation (Psa. 102:25-27 – “Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens

are the work of Your hands. ²⁶ They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. ²⁷ But You are the same, and Your years will have no end.”).

- i. No matter what changes we face in life, the one and only constant to bring us hope and direction is God, Elohim—the Creator—the Strong One!
 - 1) Even if we face unwelcomed changes in our job, paycheck, health, etc., Elohim, the Strong One, remains the same—remaining perfect and unhindered by the laws and limitation of creation that restrict us!
 - 2) That means that you and I can lean on God, the Strong Creator, who Heb. 13:8 says is the same yesterday, today, and forever, to bring stability your world.
- c. It means that unlike the material creation that is limited to time and space, Elohim the Creator is *everywhere always*!
 - i. God created time, space, and matter for our existence, not from His.
 - ii. So, God exists outside of time and space, outside the material universe we live in.
 - 1) This is why we struggle to comprehend God, seeing our viewpoint is limited to the standpoint of time, space, and matter!
 - 2) The only way we can comprehend God and the dimension He lives within is by what God reveals, by what He explains of it to us in His word.
 - iii. Yet, here is the most amazing fact: Elohim the Creator, who lives outside of creation, chose to enter time, space, and matter by sending His Son Jesus to earth as a man to live and die to save us from the death our sins bring upon us (Hebrews 2:14-18 – “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶ For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.”).

CONCLUSION:

1. So, before God showed us His gentleness, Fatherhood, or grace, He introduced Himself as Elohim, the great and powerful Creator of the Universe and all life itself!
2. You know what is interesting? As the power of God’s word created piece after piece of this creation, which Elohim judged “was good,” it was only after mankind was created that He said, “it was very good” (Gen. 1:30).
 - A. That is because you and I are God’s crowning achievement, fleshly beings harboring an eternal soul that can know and have a meaningful and eternal relationship with our eternal spirit God.
 - B. Would you like to know, God, Elohim, the Creator and enjoy the wonders of His power in your life now and forever in eternity?
3. God has made this possible by His grace found in Jesus, His Son’s life, death, and resurrection in the flesh on this earth for your salvation from sin.
4. If you desire all of this, you must come to Christ in faith, repenting of your sins, confessing your faith in Christ, and being baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins as Saul was told in Acts 22:16, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, **and wash away your sins**, calling on the name of the Lord.”).
5. Will you come?