

The Name of God

When Moses learned that God had chosen him to be the deliverer of the children of Israel from the bondage of Pharaoh, Moses questioned God as to ability to do this job.

Exodus 3:13 [NIV] *“Moses said to God, ‘Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”*

Moses asked God to reveal His name, why?

Perhaps Moses felt like an outsider as far as the children of Israel were concerned and he wanted to show he was knowable about God. Moses assumed that the people would know God’s name. This was not true however for up to that time in history God had not revealed His name.

Exodus 6:2-3 [King James] *“God also said to Moses, ‘I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them.”*

Although God had talked with and made covenants with His people, God had not revealed His name.

Moses was seeking credibility from God so that the Israelites would trust him.

Moses also needed authority to approach the leaders of the children of Israel.

What is a name?

A name is a word or words by which we are known, our identity.

We identify a person by his or her name. A name is what distinguishes a person from any other individual.

A name also refers to one’s reputation. We say, *“that person has a good name”*.

Proverbs 22:1 [NIV] *“A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.”*

To lose wealth or property hurts but they can be replaced. To lose our reputation, our good name, is irreplaceable. There will be doubts left in the minds of other people as to our status.

A person’s name given as a reference can be powerful in influencing a potential employer or partner in a business deal.

A person’s name may refer to being a substitute for someone.

“I come in so-and-so’s name”, “I am representing so-and-so.”

This means we are authorised to speak on behalf of another person.

An ambassador speaks for his country.

A policeman may arrest you in the name of the law, its authority.

God’s Name will be incorporated in

a) His identity

- b) His reputation
- c) His influence
- d) His authority

Why is this study important?

- 1) It will teach us to have a greater respect for our Creator God.

Exodus 20:7 [NIV] *“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”*

We are commanded to have great respect for God’s name, the misuse of God’s name goes far beyond blasphemous words.

- 2) This study is an effective way to know more about the God of The Bible.
- 3) Understanding God’s Name has tremendous relevance for prayer.

God’s Identity

The term “*God*” does not itself give identity. When we say God it does not always mean the Christian God.

This is why we should always refer to “*the God of The Bible*” or “*the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*”.

Genesis 1:1 [NIV] *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*

The first word used in God’s Word translated “*God*” refers to God as a powerful being.

“*Elôhîym*” [el-o-heem] This is a general word for God in Hebrew. Just as “*alla*” is the word for God in Arabic. This word does **not** identify the one true God.

The word “*elôhîym*” is a plural noun in Hebrew, suggesting the Trinity which explains the plural statement in:-

Genesis 1:26 [NIV] *“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”*

The Old Testament word that clearly identifies the name of the true God is “*Yahweh*”.

“*Yahweh*” is strictly a Hebrew word and most translations will use the word “*LORD*” using a full capital for every letter because there are other words that can be translated “*Lord*”, one is “*Adonai*”.

Psalms 110:1 [NIV] *“The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”*

In Hebrew this says “*Yahweh*” says to my “*Adonai*” sit at my right hand.

The Authorised Version sometimes translates “*Yahweh*” as “*Jehovah*”. This was first attested in the 12th Century AD.

The reason behind this is that the name of God was considered too Holy to be vocalised. “*Yhwh*” the tetragramaton [word of four letters] was the original Hebrew.

Even today Orthodox Jews will not pronounce the word “*Yahweh*”, a mediaeval superstition.

When the vowels are combined with the consonants YHWH it was assumed the spelling should be “*Jehovah*”.

There is no hint that ancient Jews did not pronounce the name as originally given.

Jehovah Witnesses use Jehovah as the name of God when scholarly studies show it was never the original name. They should rename themselves “*Yahweh Witnesses*” but I feel this will not happen.

Strictly speaking “*Yahweh*” is the only name of God.

“*Yahweh*” is the name of a person while other names attributed and used in scripture for God are attributes of “*Yahweh*”.

“*Yahweh*” means literally “*one who is*” of “*one who causes to be*” or “*I will be what I will be*”.

Exodus 3:14-15 [NIV] “*God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the 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, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.”*”

This is the only word God has ever revealed as to be His personal name.

Other words are used to describe God; sometimes we may refer to them as names although, technically, they are descriptions:

- 1 **El.** *This merely means god in the widest sense; even an image is treated as a god* (Genesis 35:2)
 - a) ‘I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God (*El*)’ (Deuteronomy 5:9)
 - b) ‘The God (*El*) of Bethel’ (Genesis 31:13)
- 2 **El Elyon.** *‘The most high God’ as worshipped by Melchizedek* (Genesis 14:19; cf. Numbers 24:16; Psalm 7:17; Daniel 7:22)
- 3 **El Olam.** *‘The eternal God’* (Genesis 21:33)
- 4 **El Elohe-Israel.** *‘The God of Israel’* (Genesis 33:20)
- 5 **Jahweh-jireh.** *‘The Lord provides’* (Genesis 22:8, 14)
- 6 **Jahweh-nissi.** *‘The Lord is my banner’* (Exodus 17:15)
- 7 **Yahweh-shalom.** *‘The Lord is peace’* (Judges 6:24)
- 8 **Yahweh-tsidkenu.** *‘The Lord our righteousness’* (Jeremiah 23:6)
- 9 **Yahweh-shammah.** *‘The Lord is there’* (Ezekiel 48:35)
- 10 **Yahweh-shebot.** *‘The Lord of hosts’*
 - a) This is translated the Lord Almighty in the New International Version (1 Samuel 1:3; 1 Samuel 17:45)
 - b) It is used to show Yahweh as Protector of his people, the ‘hosts’ being all the heavenly powers ready to carry out the Lord’s command. It is used 88 times in Jeremiah.

11 **Quedos Israel.** *The Holy One of Israel – a favourite with Isaiah (used 29 times).* Similarly:

- a) The mighty One of Israel (Isaiah 1:24)
- b) The Glory of Israel (1 Samuel 15:29)

12 **Ancient of Days** (Daniel 7:9, 13, 22). *It alternates with Most High* (Daniel 7:18, 22, 25, 27)

In ancient Hebrew times the name of a person had great significance for it depicted the personality of the one to whom it belonged.

Luke 1:31 [NIV] *“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.”*

Mary was commanded to call her child the Son of God, Jesus. When we transliterate the Greek for “Jesus” back into Hebrew it comes out as “Joshua” meaning “the Lord is salvation”.

Matthew 1:20-24 [NIV] *“But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”, which means, “God with us.” When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.”*

“Immanuel” – another name for Jesus Christ who was God in the flesh with us.

The God of Glory cares greatly about the honour of His name which is His reputation.

Exodus 20:5-7 [NIV] *“You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments. “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”*

The God of Glory admits He is a jealous God and in context it is His name we are not to misuse, for it reflects His reputation.

God was prepared to destroy all Israel and start all over again with a different people. Moses interceded and reminded God of His reputation, and what the enemies of Israel would say!

Numbers 14:13-16 [NIV] *“Moses said to the LORD, “Then the Egyptians will hear about it! By your power you brought these people up from among them. And they will tell the inhabitants of this land about it. They have already heard that you, O LORD, are with these people and that you, O LORD, have been seen face to face, that your cloud stays over them, and that you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. If you put these people to death all at one time, the nations who have heard this report about you will say, ‘The LORD was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath; so he slaughtered them in the desert.’”*

The strength and genius of Moses was that he cared so much about the honour of God’s name.

The situation we have just read is proof of this, he resisted the temptation to allow God to relieve him of the stress the rebellious children of Israel were causing him and receive the honour of being the father of a great nation himself.

Real proof that we are growing as a Christian will be that we really care about the honour of God’s name, His reputation.

We care about the honour of our own name, our reputation. When we are so enamoured with God that we are detached from our personal situation and care about the honour of His name first and foremost we are really growing as a Christian.

There are but few truly great leaders in the Christian church universal today because they care more about the honour of their own name rather than that of our Creator God.

All that we do as God's people should reflect God's name, His reputation.

Joshua 2:10-12 [NIV] *"We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that you will show kindness to my family, because I have shown kindness to you. Give me a sure sign."*

Israel's reputation was God's reputation. What God does in the lives of His people reflects on His name.

All that we are, who are called by His name [Christians] can bring to God honour or dishonour.

2 Samuel 12:13-14 [NIV] *"Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die."*

David repented deeply of the sin of adultery and murder but the name of God, Whom David reflected, was brought into contempt.

1 Corinthians 5:1 [NIV] *"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife."*

The incestuous sin in the Corinth church brought great dishonour to God's church as a whole and Christ personally.

The first thing the disciples were to learn about the Father in the model prayer given to them by Christ was to honour God's name.

Psalms 111:9 [NIV] *"He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever, holy and awesome is his name."*

Holy and awesome is God's name, the redeeming and covenant making God.

Isaiah 57:15 [NIV] *"For this is what the high and lofty One says, he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."*

To truly understand the holiness of God's name will humble us and bring us to repentance which will then allow God to raise us up and use us to fulfil His Will.

2 Chronicles 6:7-8 [NIV] *"My father David had it in his heart to build a temple for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. But the LORD said to my father David, 'Because it was in your heart to build a temple for my Name, you did well to have this in your heart."*

David wanted to build such a wonderful temple for God that all who saw it would wonder and glorify the name of God.

Matthew 6:9 [NIV] *"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,"*

To “hallow” God’s name is to:-

- a) Acknowledge His Holy character.
- b) Accept His revealed word as the yardstick of our lives [not rebelling as Adam and Eve did]
- c) Giving God the glory [praise] for all He has created and done for humanity.

2 Chronicles 7:14 [NIV] *“if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”*

Note:- We give glory to God before we can expect to receive mercy and grace.

God’s reputation was implied when He told the nation of Israel the way back to Him, should they wander.

All of our requests to God must be with the glorifying of God’s name foremost in our mind, for example:-

“Father glorify Yourself by providing me with my daily needs.”

“Father glorify Yourself by showing Your compassion, mercy and love when You forgive me my sins.”

“Father glorify Yourself by protecting me from the evil one.”

All our prayers, thoughts and affections must be with the goal of bringing glory to our Father as His created son.

The third commandment is to protect the name of God from abuse.

Exodus 20:7 [NIV] *“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”*

This is more than a warning against swearing, the misuse of God’s Holy name, or cursing in God’s name.

The basic meaning of the third commandment is to “let God be God” and not bring His name into our self-made situations.

Hebrews 6:16 [NIV] *“Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument.”*

When people swear an oath they must appeal to a greater authority.

Matthew 5:33-37 [NIV] *“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.’ But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”*

This is how Jesus interpreted the third commandment. To appeal to the name of God when swearing is to lower Him.

James 4:11-12 [NIV] *“Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it,*

but sitting in judgement on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you, who are you to judge your neighbour?"

In the context of our relationships with other Christians, James warns us not to mistreat each other by claiming God is with us and not with them. Such conduct is to abuse the name of God.

James 5:12 [NIV] *"Above all, my brothers, do not swear, not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned."*

We should *"keep God's name out of it"* when our personal judgement is involved.

As Christians, who are called by God's name, we should be conscious of what truly does bring glory to Him.

Our prayers should reflect those things which will bring glory to God.

What will do this?

More people becoming Christians?

Our example of Holy living?

Events that bring shame on wicked people?

A government that recognises the true God and administers righteously?

Miracles that point people to Christ and bring them to repentance?

God gave new meaning to His name by giving His name to Jesus.

Philippians 2:9 [NIV] *"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,"*

The name that is above every other name is Yahweh.

Matthew 1:21 [NIV] *"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

Yahweh was not the name God's Son had at birth, this renaming was after Jesus ascended to heaven.

This renaming of Jesus meant that He had the total approval of His Father.

Matthew 3:17 [NIV] *"And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

God was well pleased with Jesus.

Matthew 17:5 [NIV] *"While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"*

God loved and was well pleased with Jesus.

Hebrews 1:3-4 [NIV] *"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs."*

Now that Jesus had finished His mission on earth the Father in total confidence bestowed on Jesus His own name.

Isaiah 42:8 [NIV] *“I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.”*

God will not give His glory [His name] to another [to another human being].

Philippians 2:9 [NIV] *“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,”*

But God did give His glory [His name] to Jesus. This is one more proof of the deity of Jesus. God put the whole of His own reputation in the name of His Son.

When we claim to be Christians we are *“little Christs”* [the meaning of the word Christians] and are called created sons of God.

Does our conduct allow God to call us His sons with whom He is well pleased?

The influence of the name of God.

Influence is the power to produce an effect when the name of God is mentioned.

Joshua 2:10-11 [NIV] *“We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.”*

The dread of God’s name, His reputation, fell on the land of Canaan even before the people of Israel entered it.

Judges 7:14-15 [NIV] *“His friend responded, “This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands.” When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he worshipped God. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, “Get up! The LORD has given the Midianite camp into your hands.”*

The reputation of Gideon’s God had put fear into his enemies.

Psalms 115:1 [NIV] *“Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.”*

The reputation of our God causes us to praise Him.

Influence with God by using His name.

John 14:10 [NIV] *“Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.”*

Whatever Jesus asked for He received from the Father. Jesus never knew unanswered prayers.

How was this so?

John 5:19 [NIV] *“Jesus gave them this answer: “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”*

Jesus only did what the Father wanted Him to do. Whenever Jesus asked for anything it was because He was simultaneously prompted by the Father to do so. Jesus never went against the Father's Will, He always prayed within the Father's Will.

John 14:11-14 [NIV] *“Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”*

This authority to pray in the name of Jesus has been promised to us now that Jesus is at the Father's side in heaven.

However, asking in the name of Jesus means more than repeating the words, we could utter these words in unbelief.

To pray in Jesus' name means to embrace the authority to speak to the Father in the same way Jesus did. Remember Jesus was as one with the Father and never prayed outside the Father's Will.

How do we know the Father's Will?

a) The Father's Will is found in His Word. His Old and New Testaments and the life of the Living Word of God, Jesus.

b) **John 14:15-17** [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

By seeking the special presence of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:13-14 [NIV] *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.”*

The Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth, God's Word and God's Will, so we can pray within God's Will.

1 John 5:14-15 [NIV] *“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have what we asked of him.”*

When we truly come in the name of Jesus we know that we are really speaking for Him, that is we will pray in the Father's Will as He did.

God's name is bound up with His identity, who He is.

He is Yahweh, the “*One who is*” the “*great I am*”.

This God of Glory is jealous for the honour of His name and all we, His people, say and do should bring honour to His name, His reputation.