

The Names of God (with Some Attributes), The Holy Trinity and God The Father

I. The Names of God:

- A. The most important name for God in the Old Testament is “Yahweh”. It occurs about 6,800 times and is commonly translated as “Lord”.
- B. It is believed that *Yahweh* is derived from a form of the Hebrew verb “to be”. This is not at all surprising in light of one of the most important revelations of God about Himself as recorded in Exodus 3:14. Here, Moses asks for the Name of God. This is what God said (please read).

Exodus 3:14: God’s Name is \_\_\_\_\_ OR “I cause to be.”

- C. Inherent in the Name *Yahweh* is both transcendence (God is above all things) and immanence (“to remain within,”/God is closer to you than you are to yourself)! These two attributes of God – transcendence and immanence – are fundamental characteristics of God taught in the Bible!

Question #1: In what way is God being transcendent comforting to you?

Question #2: In what way is God being immanent comforting to you?

Question #3: It is pretty common knowledge that Jesus is called “Lord,” but in light of the fact that this title was THE title for God in the Old Testament, just what are we saying about Jesus by calling Him “Lord”? What are we saying when we say that Jesus is “my Lord”?

- D. The original language of the Old Testament – Hebrew (and some Aramaic) – did not have vowel points. All the words were formed by consonants. The original Name of God had four consonants: Y H W H. This name was considered so holy, that the ancient Hebrews would not even say it out loud so as to not risk breaking the 2<sup>nd</sup>. Commandment! Without pronouncing the actual name, the name was referred to as the *tetragrammaton*. “Tetra” means four (4) and the term means “the four-lettered word/(name)”.
- E. Now the reason I share this interesting bit of information is because it explains how other names for God arose. The name *Adonai* that means “My Great Lord” began to be used in place of *Yahweh*. However, when this mixture of names was written down, the vowel points that developed later from the name *Adonai* were transported into the consonants of the name *Yahweh*. The hybrid product is the name *Jehovah*. Thus *Jehovah* is a later development of *Yahweh* and both mean

“Lord”. By the way, this makes the claim of the *Jehovah’s Witnesses* somewhat interesting since they insist they use the *original* name of God!

F. Here are three more important Old Testament Names (there are many more, but these are among the more frequent and popular):

1. *El Shaddai* = “God, the One of the Mountain(s)”. This name depicts God’s power, transcendence and might. Sometimes English translations summarize the translation = “God Almighty,” but this blurs the name with other names.
2. *Yahweh Sabaoth* = “Lord of Hosts/Armies”. The second part of this name is often confused with another word, namely “Sabbath”. Sabbath means “7<sup>th</sup> day/day of rest,” while Sabaoth means hosts/armies. What do the heavenly armies consist of?
3. *Elohim* = “Mighty God”. Occurs a lot (about 2,500 times)! But here is the fascinating point about this name: It is *plural!*

Plural? What? Does that mean there is more than one God? No, because at the same time, the Bible clearly teaches that God is One and that there is no other God.

Please read Isaiah 44:6 together:

***“This is what the Lord says – Israel’s King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.”***

So what gives? Why plurality in one of His Names? The Bible is revealing something else about God: He is at the same time ONE and yet plurality resides in His identity. Do you sense another important doctrine coming? Let’s see where this plurality comes out in other places:

Please read Genesis 1:26

Please read Genesis 3:22

Please read Genesis 11:7

Please comment on these verses: What do you think? How is it justified to say that God is One and that at the same time, He possesses in some way, plurality?

II. The Doctrine of The Holy Trinity:

- A. The term “trinity” is nowhere in the Bible, but it began to be employed in the Christian Church (probably first by Tertullian, c. 160-c.220/240, who used the word

*Trinitas*) to express the Biblical truth that God is One and at the same time, revealing Himself according to a certain plurality.

B. Illustrations from Tertullian in *Against Praxeas* (ANF 3, 603):

1. Root -- Tree -- Fruit
2. Fountain -- River -- Stream out of the River
3. Sun -- Ray -- Apex of the Ray

C. Draw Trinity Diagram with Scripture.

D. Therefore “trinity” is Biblical in the sense that it represents what the Bible teaches.

E. We say “holy” because this is in regards to God. This is a designation that refers to how God is completely set apart and utterly wonderful in who and what He is.

F. By the way, “who” and “what” is probably one of the best ways to understand and explain the Holy Trinity (to the best of our ability, because we can only go so far and it is ultimately a deep mystery...we are after-all describing God)!

G. “WHO” describes the PERSON (not “human,” but an individual and personal entity) aspect in God. That is the fact that God has RELATIONSHIP WITHIN HIMSELF. Thus we speak of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as distinct persons within the Godhead/the substance of God. This is what we mean by “3 in 1”. There are three persons in one God. So Jesus teaches:

Matthew 28:19: ***“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”***

H. Notice the dynamic of RELATIONSHIP (WHO God is) as you read these passages:

John 5:19-23

John 14:15-27

I. We can further appreciate this personal aspect via the prepositions that are especially connected to the three persons in relation to the Christian:

1. We pray TO the Father.
2. We are IN Christ.
3. We live BY or WITH the Holy Spirit.

J. On the other hand, “WHAT” describes the SUBSTANCE or ESSENCE or BEING of God. *What* is God? He is spirit and He is ONE!

John 4:24: ***“God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”***

K. So what do we correctly say of each person?

1. Each person of the Godhead/of the Holy Trinity *has the whole essence entire and undivided.*
2. All three persons are the One God. The Father is the One God. The Son is the One God. The Holy Spirit is the One God. That is to also say, the Holy Spirit is not 1/3 God or 33.33333% God. He IS God.
3. Thus all three persons share all the divine/God attributes and characteristics. The Father is HOLY, and so is the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son is OMNIPOTENT, and so is the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is OMNISCIENT, and so is the Father and the Son.
4. It is also true that all three persons are properly attributed the WORKS of God. So, who created the heavens and the earth? Here are four possible correct answers: The One God OR The Father OR The Son OR The Holy Spirit. For example Colossians 1:16 speaking of Jesus:

***“For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.”***

So here’s a trick question: “Who created the universe, the Father or the Son?”

5. There are these general exceptions: The Father sent the Son and this “sending” represents the unique *incarnation*. That is, ONLY the Son took on human flesh; ONLY the Son became a man and ONLY the Son was both God and man AT THE SAME TIME. In addition, The Father and The Son sent the Holy Spirit to be our comforter and counselor, so yes, there are *some* unique aspects in regards to the PERSONS of the Holy Trinity. These aspects, however, are the exception, not the rule.
6. The great Athanasius (4<sup>th</sup>. Cent. A.D.) put it this way: ***“We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance.”***
7. Here are some of the major FALSE teachings regarding the Holy Trinity:
  - a. Modalism (Modalistic Monarchianism): Denies the distinct persons and says that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are but three modes or energies of the One Divine Essence/God. Sometimes God appears as Father, sometimes God appears as Son, and other times God appears

as Holy Spirit. Here, it is as if God were switching masks. This is a very *bad* teaching!

- b. Dynamic Monarchianism: Jesus was not God, but only had the *power* of God. This was the teaching of the false teacher Arius in the 4<sup>th</sup>. Cent. (and thus also called *Arianism*). This is very popular to this day and is a teaching many cults adhere to (like the J.W.'s).
- c. Tri-theism is the crass claim that we have three gods. This denies the unity of substance and essence. By the way, Muslims feel that Christians are tri-theists. They have Allah and He is the One God according to the Islamic teaching, so in their view for us to say "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" is God is tri-theism.
- d. A contemporary cultic teaching: The "Tri-unity": Father, Son and Holy Spirit are "one in purpose." Here, the Father and the Son appeared to this cult's lead prophet Joseph Smith. The Holy Spirit in this system is the power or energy of God. This system belongs to Mormonism or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

### III. God as Father:

- A. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Jesus taught them "The Lord's Prayer" (Matthew 6 and Luke 11). It begins with "Our Father in heaven..."
- B. Knowing God as Father is a fantastically important Biblical doctrine.
  - 1. It presents our proper relationship to God while we live in the grace of Jesus Christ. He is our Father and He loves us as His dear children.
  - 2. Again, He is spirit (John 4).
  - 3. He desires to be truly known through His Son (John 10:8-21). It is impossible to know God as Father apart from knowing Christ. Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6).
  - 4. So if one denies the Son, they in fact deny God as Father. See 1<sup>st</sup> John 2:23.
  - 5. That is, we completely reject the argument that Christians, Jews and Muslims have the same basic faith since they all believe in the Old Testament, Abraham, and that there is one God. This is a gross misrepresentation, because of 1<sup>st</sup> John 2:23!

6. This is the reason why such problems as unionism and syncretism [give definitions] are so serious. We cannot pretend to pray to the same God with anyone who denies Christ. This is not to say that the Christian is not called to *love* the Jew or *pray for* the Muslim – they are! – but the Christian cannot in any way worship with them! It is sheer contradiction and denial of God’s Word. Just be aware, however, that this is the trend of our culture.
7. But to know Christ is to also know The Father. We are “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17).
8. We have the unique right and position to call Him “daddy,” at least that’s a pretty close translation of the word, “*Abba*.” See Romans 8:15.
9. This puts us in a truly wonderful position. We may approach Him boldly and with great faith! See Genesis 32 and read verses 9-12 and 22-30!
10. Thus, we know our Heavenly Father blesses us in the following ways:
  - a. He PROTECTS us.
  - b. He PROVIDES for us.
  - c. He PRESERVES us.

We conclude by reading Matthew 6:25-34!

Appendix 3: References/“Seat of Doctrine”

*Catechism*: 54-73, 102-111.