

Truth Matters — About God The Father

The Intimate Name for God

- Part 1 Review... His Necessity
- Part 2 Review... His Nature... Unity/Trinity/Spirit/Person... His Attributes

Part 3. THE NAMES OF GOD

Introduction: A study a number of years ago found that if a child has a very unusual name, that child is four times more likely to become a juvenile delinquent than others. Names can affect people. We all remember Johnny Cash's song, *A Boy Named Sue*. I heard some time ago about a man who appeared before a judge to have his name changed. The judge said, "What's your name now?" He said, "William Stinks." The judge laughed and said, "I don't blame you, what do you want it changed to?" He said, "Bill Stinks."

Names make a difference to people. Juliet asked Romeo that question and answered it herself: "*What's in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet.*" Granted, fair Juliet. But you and I and Romeo are people, not plants; and we know what our names are.

So, why do people go to court to have their names changed? And why do parents agonize over the names they choose for their children?

At some point in our childhood, many of us complained about our names and gave thanks when somebody pinned a nickname on us. In later years, no doubt, we dropped the nickname, but at least it took us through those dangerous years when the mention of a boy's name could be a declaration of war. One psychologist studied the names of 15,000 juvenile delinquents and, discovered that those with odd or embarrassing names were in trouble four times as much as the others. Names do make a difference—if not to roses, at least to people.

Names are especially meaningful when you move into the world of the Bible. It is estimated that there are more than 3,000 names of God revealed in Scripture.

The favorite title for God used by Jesus in the New Testament is Father (Gr. *pater*). In the Gospel of John, Jesus called God His Father 156 times. He not only claimed intimacy with the Father; He claimed to be one with the Father-- which is one reason the Jews hated Him (see John 5:18). Neither the Jews nor their Scriptures regularly called God by the name Father. To them, God was the majestic, powerful Creator or Master. They did not know Him or approach

Him in the intimate relationship as Father. On a few occasions the Old Testament does identify God as having paternal instincts, as in Jeremiah 31:9 where God says "I am a father to Israel." But this was a metaphor or a picture, not a name or relationship. To Israel, God thundered from Mount Sinai in judgment. He was the Holy One in the midst of the *Shekinah* Glory cloud that rested in the holy of holies. The writer of Hebrews best summarized the Old Testament perspective of God: "For our God is a consuming fire" (12:29).

Jesus revealed a loving relationship with God by calling Him Father. He taught His disciples a new introduction to their prayers: "Our Father which art in heaven" (Matt. 6:9). Because Jesus' revelation of the Father was counter to the view of the religious rulers of His day, they wanted to stone Him (see John 5:18; 10:30,31). To understand the Father, you must look to the Trinity. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all equal persons within the Godhead, yet one God. They are equal in nature, separate in person and submissive in duty. All the Father is in holiness, power and wisdom, so is the Son and the Holy Spirit. They are separate in person, for each has His own personality, i.e., intellect, emotion and will. They are submissive in function, for the Father sends the Son and they both send the Holy Spirit (see 14:26; 15:26). The first recorded words of the young Jesus revealed new truth about God. At age 12 Jesus said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49).

Notice that Jesus used the name Father in reference to God, rather than to Joseph. We learn from this first reference *Believers ... do not come to God in prayer as mere subjects to a king in his court. They crawl into the lap of a heavenly Father as a child who comes for protection or help.* that God is a Father, that the Father must have priority in our lives and that the Father sent the Son on a mission. Because of the structure of the family, the world understood the nature and function of a father before Jesus revealed that God is our Father. This does not mean that the doctrine of God the Father gets its meaning from earthly fathers. Actually, the opposite is true. The human family on earth reflects the eternal family in heaven. Since God is our Father, all who are saved enter a spiritual family.

Believers have a spiritual kinship with each other and with God. Believers in Christ are brother and sister to one another. They are "sons of God" (see John 1:12) and "children of God" (see 13:33). As such they call God their Father. They do not come to God in prayer as mere subjects to a king in his court.

They crawl into the lap of a heavenly Father as a child who comes for protection or help.

Notice the terms used for God as Father in the New Testament: "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth" (Luke 10:21); "heavenly Father" (11:13); "the Father" (John 4:23); "my Father" (5:17); "God the Father" (6:27); "one Father even God" (8:41); "Holy Father" (17:11); "righteous Father" (17:25); "God our Father" (Rom. 1:7); "Abba, Father" (8:15); "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:6); "Father of mercies" (2 Cor.1:3); "God and Father of all" (Eph. 4:6); "Father of spirits" (Heb. 12:9); and "Father of lights" (Jas. 1:17). Some have interpreted the New Testament emphasis on God's new name, Father, to mean that everyone born in the world is a child of the Father in heaven. This view is called the "Fatherhood of God," which means that (1) all people are considered the children of God; (2) no one is considered lost; and (3) it is held that all will eventually go to live with the Father in heaven. This works out to the "Brotherhood of Man," implying universal salvation. But the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man are not biblical truths. Actually, the opposite is taught in Scripture. The Bible teaches that all are sinners (see Rom. 3:23); the wages of sin is eternal death (see Rom. 6:23); only those who believe in Jesus Christ will be saved (see Acts 4:12; John 14:6); and eternal life requires regeneration (see John 3:3,7).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT GOD IS OUR FATHER?

After a Christian understands the nature and function of his Heavenly Father he asks, What does it mean to me? The believer under the New Testament has certain benefits that were not available under the Old Covenant. In addition to a God who is majestic and lofty, the believer now has intimate access to His presence.

Fellowship with the Father

It is possible for us to crawl up in the lap of God as a small child will cuddle in the lap of his father for protection. "Our fellowship is with the Father," said John (1 John 1:3). God will protect His children even more than a father on earth will care for his child.

Access to the Father

No matter where we are, we can have immediate entrance into the throne of the majesty of God, who is also our Father. Paul notes that because we are adopted into the family, "We cry Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). He knows our needs before we cry, and we can go to Him at anytime.

Guidance by the Father

First, the Father teaches His children how they should go (see Ps. 32:8). Second, He actually guides them, through the indwelling Holy Spirit and principles of the Word (see Prov. 3:5,6; John 16:13). In the third place, the Father speaks through the conscience and will give guidance to His children (Rom. 2:15).

Security from the Father

The Father wants all of His children, "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (8:29). Because of that He works all things together for good (see v. 28). But sometimes the Father must correct His children by allowing trials to come into their lives. Like most children, we do not enjoy laborious teaching sessions. However, the Father does everything for our good. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (v. 32).

Inheritance of the Father

Because we are children of the heavenly Father, we are His heirs. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (v. 17). All the riches of the Father will one day belong to those who are His children. Jesus promised, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

WHAT DOES THE FATHER DO?

What could God as Father do for us that He could not or did not do before? When Jesus revealed God as the Father, a further self-revelation was given of God's nature and function.

A Father Gives Life to His Children

A child inherits his physical and immaterial nature from his parents. A child who is born again into God's family also gets several things.

- **First**, he gets a new nature, which is God's nature (2 Cor. 5:17). As such, he is known as a child of God.
- **Second**, he gets God's life, which is eternal life. He will live forever because he has the life of God in him (see John 3:36).
- **Third**, he gets a new standing in heaven. He is adopted into the family of God and is called a son of God (Rom. 8:14-16).
- **Fourth**, he has new desires, indicating his new nature. He will desire to pray, read the Word and show forth the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23).

- **Fifth**, he is now a member of the family of God. He calls God his Father, and other Christians are his brothers and sisters in Christ.

A Father Loves His Children

Many people think God doesn't love them when a calamity comes into their lives. This is a wrong view of God. God is a Father who loves His children, not a Father who hates them. As a result of this love, He will do good things for them. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father" (Luke 11:13). Of course when His children err, there is a place for the heavenly Father to correct them, just like a father on earth. But the basic premise is that God loves His children.

A Father Protects His Children

The natural desire of every father is to protect his child. So the Father will give eternal life to those who trust in Him. "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" John 10:28,29). The greatest protection of all is that no one can separate us from the love of God the Father.

A Father Provides for His Children

Many fathers work all week because they love to work. But underlying that, the truly loving father desires to provide for his wife and children. The Bible says, "And, ye fathers provoke not your children ... but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). When an earthly father nurtures his child, he is providing him with positive training. Likewise, the heavenly Father will care for His children. "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matt. 6:30). The promise includes food, drink and other basic necessities, for as it concludes, "your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (v. 32).

God is called **SEVEN PRIMARY** names in the Word of God. These names give us a progressive revelation about His nature. In the following thoughts, the first name in parenthesis is the word used in the *Authorized King James Version* of the Scriptures (KJV). The second word in parenthesis is the Hebrew name from which it was translated.

1. In Genesis 1:1, He is called (**God**). This comes from the Hebrew word (Elohim) which means the strong and faithful one and usually deals with Him as the Creator.
2. In Genesis 2:4, He is called (**LORD**). This comes from the Hebrew word (Jehovah) which means the self-existent one that revealeth Himself and usually deals with His work in Redemption. In the KJV Bible this word is written with all capital letters.
3. In Genesis 14:18, He is called (**The Most High God**). This comes from the Hebrew word (El Elyon) which means the Highest One, and deals with Him as the possessor of Heaven and Earth.
4. In Genesis 15:2, He is called (**Lord**). This comes from the Hebrew word (Adonai) which means master and deals with His authority.
5. In Gen. 16:13, He is called (**God**). This is the Hebrew word (El Roi) which means the God that sees, and deals with Him watching over his children.
6. In Genesis 17:1, He is called (**The Almighty God**). This comes from the Hebrew word (El Shaddai) which means the many breasted one. This is the word used for the mother's breast and reveals God as all-sufficient, all-satisfying, and all-sustaining.
7. In Genesis 21:23, He is called (**The Everlasting God**). This comes from the Hebrew word (El Olam) which means infinite in time and age and deals with Him as one existing through all ages.

Those who study the Hebrew language tell us there are also **EIGHT COMPOUND** names by which God reveals Himself to His people. These names are not all mentioned in the text of the Word of God, but there are incidents that reveal Him as such to us. All of these are connected to the word Jehovah and generally deal with His redemptive work.

1. Jehovah-Jireh, Genesis 22:14, -This means *the God of pre-vision and provision*. This deals with God seeing our needs before they arise and having the provision ready when we need them. In Genesis 22, God manifests Himself by providing the ram for a burnt offering.

In # 1, with His Pre-vision, God sees our need for a Saviour before we were ever born and in His provision, God provided Christ as a lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

2. Jehovah-Nissi, -This means *the Lord our Banner* and deals with the Lord fighting our battles for us against the enemies we face in our lives. In Exodus 17:8-16, God delivered Israel from Amalek, and promised them that He would *"have war with Amalek from generation to generation."* Moses then built an altar there and called the name of it Jehovah-Nissi to remind Joshua and the children of Israel that it was not Joshua, but God who won that battle.

In # 2, we see Christ battling Satan over the souls of mankind, winning the war at Calvary.

3. Jehovah-Rapha, -This means *the Lord that healeth thee*. This deals with God as both our spiritual and physical healer. In Exodus 15:23-26, He reveals himself as such to Israel saying, *"I am the LORD that healeth thee."*

In # 3, we see Him healing our sin-sick souls with salvation - I Peter 2:24.

4. Jehovah-Shalom, -This means *the Lord our peace*. God reveals himself in this manner to Gideon in Judges 6:23. In verse 24, Gideon built an altar and called it Jehovah-shalom. To us, this deals with the fact that God alone could reconcile the sinner back to Himself, thus making peace between the sinless God and sinful man through the blood of Christ, Colossians 1:20.

In # 4, when God saves us, the result is peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Jehovah-Saboath, This means *the Lord of hosts*. This presents Him as a mighty warrior protecting us. It also pictures Him as being over the host of angels that serve us and minister to us, I Samuel 17:45. God is pictured in this manner many times through the Bible, especially in Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

In # 5, we see Him as a mighty warrior protecting us against the enemies of our souls, keeping us saved.

6. Jehovah-Ra-ah, -This means *the Lord, my shepherd*. This is pictured for us so wonderfully in Psalm 23, and deals with the Lord guiding and guarding His sheep. He is also portrayed as protecting and providing for us as His sheep.

In # 6, we see Him as the great shepherd watching over His flock, guiding and guarding us, walking with us, and talking with us.

7. Jehovah-Tsidkenu, -This means *THE LORD, OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*. In Jeremiah 23:6 we see these words prophetically dealing with the restoration of Israel, when the Lord Jesus shall reign in righteousness. Today it also speaks of God imputing His righteousness to us.

In # 7, He imputes His righteousness to us. This deals with the settling of our account in heaven. God not only imputed Christ's righteousness to us, but He also imparted His righteousness to us whereby He enables us to live a holy life. Finally...

8. Jehovah-Shammah, -This means *the Lord is present*. In Ezekiel 48:35 we read, *"And the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there."* This teaches us that some day we will be in His presence there, but it also speaks of Him being present with us now.

In # 8, we see that one day Christ will come and catch out His church from this world "...to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with Lord," I Thessalonians 4:16-17.

It is very interesting when you put the meaning of all these compound words together and see God's plan of redemption, and how His provisions for the redeemed ones are revealed.