

JEHOVISTIC NAMES OF GOD

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Genesis 1:27.

Having considered some of the divine titles compounded with El, we shall now study some of God's names in which Jehovah is joined to other words describing specific aspects of His character and grace. In His redemptive relation to man Jehovah has some compound names which reveal Him as meeting every need of man from his lost estate to the end.

I. Jehovah-Sabaoth -- The Lord of Hosts.

This name is used most frequently and is translated "The Lord of Hosts." It is closely related to El Elyon, "The Most High God," but with a further unfolding of the greatness of His power and love toward men. Jehovah, His personal name, expresses His relationship to His people: He is the God of grace, Who has entered into covenant relationship with them.

This name is not used in the Bible until it appears in the Book of First Samuel, and it occurs mostly in the utterances and writings of the prophets. The title Jehovah-Sabaoth embraces both the heavenly and the earthly hosts of the Lord. The thought expressed in it is the joining of the heavenly forces with the earthly people of God -- the bringing of heavenly power to the aid of His elect.

At a time when Israel had sunk into weakness and bondage through sinful self-indulgence and apostasy, God was still ready to respond with irresistible might to the faith and loyalty of even a few. Despite the defection of His people He was "The Lord of Hosts." Within the lifetime of Samuel and David Israel was raised from defeat and ignominy to the summit of its glory and strength through the grace and might of Jehovah-Sabaoth. No wonder this is the characteristic name for God in the Book of First Samuel.

The thought expressed in this name is the heavenly aid available to the people of God in their time of need, if they truly put their trust in Jehovah-Sabaoth. Jehovah-Sabaoth is presented to us as the Lord of the heavenly hosts and the Guardian and Helper of His earthly people. He is their God and they are part of His hosts. All His creatures are under His control, and must obey His sovereign will, consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly. When His people were rebellious and backsliding, the armies of the alien were used by Him as a scourge. How terrible is the thought of the Lord of Hosts fighting against His own people instead of with them, and all because of their sins! That is the inevitable consequences of waywardness and cherished evil.

While that must be recognized, the dominant thought expressed in this name is comforting and reassuring. There are illimitable resources at the disposal of God in behalf of His people, of which we have only a small comprehension. Well might we look to Him with unquestioning confidence in every time of need and ask the aid of heavenly power to help us in the trying hour.

II. Jehovah-Jireh -- The Lord Will Provide.

This is one of the most interesting of the titles of God. It has captured the imagination of Christian people to an exceptional degree, so that it is one of the best known of the compound names of God. Yet, strictly speaking, it is not used in scripture as a divine title! Jehovah-Jireh occurs only

once in the Old Testament, and then it is the name of a place. "And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen" (Genesis 22:14). But the faith of the people of God has laid hold upon this name, and raised it to the level of a title of God. In reality the place so named bore testimony to what God is and ever will be to those who put their trust in Him.

The historic incident out of which the name Jehovah-Jireh rises is one of the most moving and significant in the Word of God. It is the story of the last and greatest crisis in the life of Abraham. Every event, vicissitude, joy, trial, failure, success, blessing, hope and assurance in his life had been in preparation for and had led up to this supreme hour. The great promise had been fulfilled and the supreme hope of his life had been realized. He had settled down to live the rest of his life in peace and in joyous anticipation of the larger fulfillment of the promise through the centuries, and its final spiritual fulfillment. In this event God appeared to Abraham with the astounding command to offer up as a sacrifice his only and well-beloved son, Isaac. Abraham's feelings can scarcely be imagined. His tremendous faith is not sufficiently appreciated. The record does not reveal a word of objection or remonstrance on his part, but how deep his anguish and perplexity must have been at this amazing request from the God Who had been so good to him. Yet the faith which enabled him to believe such a staggering promise in the first place was also sufficient for an even more staggering demand.

Suddenly, in the midst of his tranquil and happy eventide of life there came the startling, incredible command from God to take Isaac to Mount Moriah and to offer him there in sacrifice. There was only one thing for Abraham to do, and that was to obey the unmistakable command. He proved himself to be indeed a man of faith by obeying without hesitation. He "arose early in the morning," and set out, with Isaac, for the place which God had designated. It is one thing to set out upon a costly enterprise, and quite another to see it through to the end. For three days they journeyed and all the while he was pondering upon this strange command from God. To his own perplexities were added the questionings of Isaac. Unable to control his curiosity about the lamb for the burnt offering, Isaac said, "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (Genesis 22:7). Abraham's answer to this question was, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." Therein Abraham uttered, perhaps all unconsciously to himself, one of the greatest Old Testament anticipations of the glorious message of John 3:16.

Isaac was bound with cords and laid upon the altar. When the knife in Abraham's up-raised hand was about to descend, the voice of the Angel of the Lord arrested and stayed the hand of Abraham, who looked around and saw a ram caught in a thicket by its horns, which he then took and offered up as a burnt offering in the place of his son. "And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh." Here we are taught the great truths of substitution; that "God will provide" a lamb to take the place of guilty sinners; that in virtue of that office, the one whose life was a forfeit might go free.

Jehovah is a God Who always provides. For lost sinners who had no claim on Him He provided a Saviour. As believers in Him we have a claim on Him. He is our Father and we are His children. He has given us all spiritual blessings, of which at least forty-nine are mentioned in the scriptures. He knows the needs of His children and provides for them.

III. Jehovah-Rapha -- The Lord That Healeth. Exodus 15:26.

It was not long after their departure from Egypt that the Israelites met their first testing. They had seen the mighty wonders of God's delivering grace, as they came out of Egypt. Then, after passing through the Red Sea, they sang the song of triumph which is recorded in Exodus 15:1-19. A three days' march through the wilderness followed, but they did not find any water. By now their water bottles, filled before they left Egypt, were empty, and they were thirsty and apprehensive. With what eagerness they would rush to a spring of water and drink, and with what consternation they would look at one another as they tasted the water and found it bitter.

This was the first of many vicissitudes of the wilderness journey which God allowed in order to test His people. They murmured against Moses and asked, "What shall we drink?" Behind their complaint was the fear or the unspoken dread of death for lack of water. This was natural enough, but unreasonable inasmuch as God was with them. He Who had done so much for them would not let them perish of thirst. God did not deal with them according to what they deserved, but He demonstrated His power to meet their need. He "showed Moses a tree, which when he had cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet." Obviously the purpose of the casting of the tree into the water was to fasten the attention of the people upon the fact that God was healing the waters. It was a miracle. He Who had brought them out of Egypt now provided for their urgent need in the wilderness. Their fear was turned into rejoicing. God had intervened again in their behalf.

God challenged them by saying, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee" (Exodus 15:26). The God Who can comfort and strengthen in such time of need is truly "The Lord That Healeth." This name is used between sixty and seventy times in the Old Testament. It means to heal, to cure, or to restore. While the context shows that it refers to physical healing, it also includes the deeper meaning of spiritual healing. The will, the power and the longing to heal are present in Jehovah, and the only obstacle in the way is man himself.

IV. Jehovah-Nissi -- The Lord My Banner. Exodus 17:8-16.

In healing the bitter waters at Marah God had revealed Himself as Jehovah Who heals, the One Who alone has the remedy for the sins of mankind, the balm for the sorrows and sufferings of His people. The children of Israel journeyed from Marah to Elim, the place of refreshing and rest (Exodus 15:27). From there they journeyed to the wilderness of Sin (Exodus 16) where they murmured against Moses because there was no food, and where they longed for the flesh pots of Egypt. There, Jehovah appeared to them in the cloud of glory and began to feed them with the wilderness manna. Then they came to Rephidim where there was not any water (Exodus 17). "And the people thirsted for water." Hunger is difficult and discouraging enough to bear, but the sufferings and torments of thirst are unbearable. Ignoring the coming down of the manna from heaven, they questioned God's goodness and even His presence. They said, "Is the Lord among us, or not?" And there from the rock in Horeb Jehovah caused waters to spring forth to quench the thirst of the multitude.

Then came the experience which occasioned Jehovah's revelation of Himself to His people as Jehovah-nissi, The Lord my Banner. They were called upon to engage in battle with Amalek. The strife was not their seeking. They were attacked, and had to fight or perish. They were unprepared and poorly equipped, and the Amalekites were determined to prevent their passage through the wilderness, but in so doing they opposed the purpose and plan of God. In order to encourage Joshua, the leader of the expedition, Moses promised to take his position upon a hill with the rod of God in his hand. This rod was the token of God's bounteous grace and power in the past, in the deliverance from Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, and the provision of water from the rock. With that rod held aloft in the sight of all the people, to remind them "from whence cometh their help," Moses interceded with God on behalf of the armies of Israel, and God gave them the victory. In celebration of this victory, and as a memorial of their deliverance, "Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-Nissi" -- which means, "The Lord is my Banner."

Three lessons concerning spiritual warfare are paramount in the story from Exodus. First, we must "fight the good fight with all our might," yet conscious of our utter dependence upon the Lord. Second, prayer and faith go hand-in-hand. Our confidence must be in the Lord. Third, the supreme lesson is that reliance upon God must be sustained to the end.