

THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF GOD

(Continued)

IV. His Names.

Every one should have the desire to know, and every one should desire to increase his knowledge. There are so many departments of knowledge and so much to learn, and we have such a short time in which to accumulate knowledge. In this study we shall use another method of learning more about God. We shall study some of His names in order to find out what we can about Him.

In the modern Western world names of persons have no special significance. But in the ancient East especially it was otherwise. In the Bible proper names of God stand for and express His character and acts. In His names God reveals His character and His manifold relations to His creatures. It has pleased Him to reveal Himself by different names, each of which enshrines precious truths that reveal fresh possibilities for us in Him. There can be no emergency among believers to which some name of God does not apply.

The Old Testament contains a number of names and compound names of God which reveal Him in some respect of His character and dealings with men. We shall examine some of these names and their meanings.

1. Primary Names.

- (1) God -- The Hebrew equivalent is El, Elah, or Elohim. Elohim is uni-plural noun formed from El, meaning "strength" or the "Strong One," and Allah, meaning to swear or to bind oneself by an oath, thus implying faithfulness. It is translated God and occurs in the Old Testament 2,570 times.

God is the Strong One -- stronger than any one knows or even thinks. And the glorious thing to remember is that His strength is at our disposal for daily living. As God's child you can live in one of two ways. You can do your work and carry your burdens in your own strength or you may realize your weakness and ask God for His strength. May you know your weakness in order that His power can become yours!

- (2) Lord (In Capital Letters) -- Jehovah. Jehovah means the Self-Existent One Who reveals Himself. It is distinctly the redemptive name of Deity. When sin entered and redemption became necessary, it was Jehovah Elohim who sought the sinning ones (Genesis 3:9-13) and clothed them with "coats of skins (Genesis 3:21)" which is a beautiful type of the righteousness which was provided by the Lord God through sacrifice. Romans 3:21-22. The first distinct revelation of Himself by His name Jehovah was in connection with the redemption of the Covenant people out of Egypt. Exodus 3:13-17. As Redeemer emphasis is laid upon those attributes of Jehovah which, the sin and salvation of man bring into exercise, namely, His holiness, His hatred and judgement of sin, and His love for and redemption of sinners. Jehovah is the name of God which is the most frequently used in the Old Testament. It occurs 6,823 times.

The name "JAH" is found only once in the English Bible (Psalm 68:4), but in the Hebrew Old Testament it is found 49 times. It has a very simple meaning -- The "Living One." God is not dead, but He lives.

(3) Lord (In Italics) -- Adonai.

Used as a name of God, Adonai occurs approximately 300 times in the Old Testament.

The name reveals the relationship which God sustains toward his creatures and what He expects of them. It signifies sovereignty. It means that God is our Master. When God commissioned Moses to go to Egypt to deliver Israel, Moses addressed Him as Adonai, thus acknowledging God's right to his life and service. He said, "O my Lord, (Adonai) I am not eloquent ... but I am slow of speech." Exodus 4:10. After God's reply, Moses said, "O my Lord (Adonai) send someone else." Throughout the Old Testament those who recognized God as Adonai acknowledged themselves as His servants. Exodus 32:13. Since He is our master, we certainly ought to give Him implicit obedience. He owns us and wants to direct us in His service. As we walk in the pathway of obedience He will meet our needs. "But my God shall supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus our Lord."

2. Jehovistic Names (those compounded with the name Jehovah).

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. Some of these compound names are: --

(1) Jehovah-jireh. Genesis 22:13-14.

This name means "The Lord will provide." Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac. When he proved his willingness to do so, God provided a ram. Jehovah is a God who always provides. For lost sinners who had no claim on God He provided a Saviour. As believers in Him we have a claim on Him. He is our Father and we are His children. We may expect Him to bless us. He has given us all spiritual blessings, of which at least 49 are mentioned in the Scriptures. He wants us to depend upon Him. He knows the needs and provides for the necessities of His children.

(2) Jehovah-rapha. Exodus 15:26.

This name means "The Lord that healeth thee." It occurs between 60 and 70 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.

(3) Jehovah-nissi. Exodus 17:8-15.

This name means "The Lord my banner." In ancient times a banner was translated in various ways -- as an ensign, standard or pole. It was a sign of deliverance or salvation. The name means that we cannot wage warfare in our own strength alone. The evil forces of the world are too great for our unaided strength. When the banner of Jehovah was held aloft by Moses, the people were assured a victory. Today the people of God are assured of victory over the enemy of their souls when His banner is over them. He not only protects us, but He fights our battles for us. Therefore, we need not defend ourselves. We should let Him take care of us. He will do it and we have no right to take that privilege out of His hands.

(4) Jehovah-shalom. Judges 6:24.

This name means "The Lord our peace." This word is one of the most significant in the Old Testament. It harmonizes with the doctrine of the atonement as the basis of peace with God. God is the source of peace. "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." Isaiah 48:22. The only people who have peace are God's children. We get peace by reconciliation with God through Christ. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:1. "For He is our peace." Ephesians 2:14.

(5) Jehovah-raah. Psalm 23.

This name means "The Lord our Shepherd." Jehovah is the Shepherd of His people. Everything the Shepherd is to the sheep, Jehovah is to His people. The intimacy of the Shepherd is the most precious privilege of sheep. This privilege can be enjoyed and should be cultivated by the Lord's people.

(6) Jehovah-tsidkenu. Jeremiah 23:6.

This name means "The Lord our righteousness." There is no more significant word in the Old Testament. In contrast to Jehovah's perfect righteousness is man's lack of it, or his guilt. He cannot overlook this lack of righteousness in man. He requires righteousness and we do not have it so He has provided it for us and offers it to us and we can receive it. His righteousness is bestowed upon us as a free gift.

(7) Jehovah-shammah. Ezekiel 48:35.

This name means "The Lord is there," or "The Lord is present." It signifies Jehovah's abiding presence with His people under any and all circumstances. "Lo, I am with you all the days." Matthew 28:20.

3. Secondary Names.

(1) El Shaddai -- Almighty God.

The name means "The God all sufficient." Genesis 17:1-2. Shaddai occurs 48 times in the Old Testament and is translated almighty. It is derived from the word "Shad" which means a woman's breast. It signifies one who nourishes and satisfies. When connected with God it means the One who is mighty to nourish and satisfy. El Shaddai means God the breasted one; the God who is enough; the all-sufficient One.

Doubtless you have seen a person try to care for a restless and fretful child. Finally, the mother would say, "Give me that child." Immediately after she took and hugged it to her breast, it got quiet. It got quiet because it was where it was. The mother rests the child, strengthens the child, nourishes the child and satisfies the child. So, the God Who is all-sufficient wants to pour Himself into our lives, to rest us, to strengthen us, to nourish us and to satisfy us. He can satisfy us here as well as He can satisfy us in heaven. We can find happiness and satisfaction in Him, Who meets our every need.