

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

A STUDY OF THE SELF-DISCLOSURE OF GOD

By

Dr. O. William Cooper

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4742 Westbury Drive
Fort Collins, CO 80526**

Second Printing

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In writing, as in many of life's experiences, the visible features are only a small portion of what is actually involved. That has certainly been the case in the preparation of this book.

An artist I am not. I am very grateful for the artistic talents of Jody Stewart. She designed the cover of the book, and has, I believe, captured the central idea of this work very well.

A computer whiz I also am not. Dr. Peter Stone has performed his computer magic on these pages. It brought order out of potential chaos.

It takes an immense amount of time to write a book. My wife, Ruth, has very willingly encouraged me in this endeavor and I am deeply grateful for this affirmation. She has been my sounding board as I formulated ideas; her keen eye has spotted many instances where what my mind dictated and what my fingers performed on the keyboard were two very different things.

The professors who taught, colleagues who shared, parishioners who asked questions, all these have had a part in shaping the ideas that I have attempted to share in this work. I am deeply in their debt.

There is no way to list, completely, all those who played a part in the preparation of this book, but to all who have, I am very grateful and give my humble thanks. All through this writing experience, I have been asking God to give them the joy in assisting that I have experienced in the writing of it.

IN MEMORIUM

A young man came out of the mountains of West Virginia. His formal education was sparse - one week in the seventh grade. Despite limited beginnings, he possessed a humble confidence in everything he did.

He lived a Christian life. The Scriptures were very important to him. In his own way he understood them well. He never talked much about his faith; he lived it every day.

He cared for people in an unassuming way. When a promising young employee died, it touched him like it had been his own son.

He was a man of deep, penetrating quietness, a man of simple taste and few desires. Though far from wealthy, he had everything he wanted in this life.

His life was balanced. He had an insatiable gratitude to God; an unending loyalty to those with whom he spent his life.

This man had no need for a daily schedule book. Life was simpler than that. Taking his suit to the funeral home, I checked the pockets. I found two church bulletins, nothing else. God and the church were most important in his values.

Over the years I watched his kind and gentle manner. As I watched, I understood something of what Jesus meant when He said, "Father..."

In deep gratitude and with vivid memories, I humbly dedicate this book to my father,

Oscar William Cooper Sr.

O. William Cooper Jr.

INTRODUCTION

God, as an act of loving fellowship, has revealed Himself to humanity in a variety of ways which we can grasp with our minds and hearts. This self-revelation is presented in such a manner that we can only grasp it as we are enabled by the Holy Spirit.

Our inability to discern the person of God cannot be attributed to Him. He is not reluctant to be discovered. Our inability to grasp is rather an outgrowth of our casual search, our human limitations, a fear that we could not comprehend His nature at all or a fear of what we would learn that might confront us to live differently. We might not want to change that much. This often leads people to abandon the search.

Names are very important to us. We choose the name of a business with great care. An emerging nation has called itself Macedonia. Because of this, they are experiencing intense problems with the nation of Greece. The Greek government believes that the name "Macedonia" belongs to Greece. As third World countries attain their freedom, they immediately change their names.

The names of children are very significant. When John the Baptist was born, there was a lengthy discussion about what his name would be. Many American children, born in the 1930's were named Franklin, after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Most of us know children who were named after John Wesley, or John Calvin.

Our own children were given very carefully chosen names. Our daughter was named after her mother and a Biblical personality whose character had great meaning for us. Our son was named after a college professor who was very dear to my wife and me. Names are very important to people, even today.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews spoke of Jesus in these words.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word... Hebrews 1:3

There are two illustrations of who Jesus is in this verse: the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being.

The word "radiance" is "apaugasma" or "ἀπαύγασμα" in the Greek. It is made up of two words:

- "apo" or "απο" - which means "from."
- "auge" or "αυγη" which means "brightness."

This helps us to understand that it is the shining forth of a light from a luminous body. It is not a reflection, but the brightness, the radiance itself.

Jesus is also the exact representation of God's being. "Exact representation" or "express image" as some translations have it, is the Greek word "Χαρακτήρ" or "charakter." This word comes from the engravers' trade. In that day, people did not have credit cards as we do now. The wealthy, however, had essentially the same thing. An engraver would take a ring or cylinder and carve the family design into the precious stone. When a person wished to make a purchase, a bill of sale would be made out. Instead of signing the bill, they would place some soft clay or wax on it. The purchaser would then either press the ring into or roll the cylinder through the soft wax. This would leave an exact representation of the design on the ring or cylinder in the wax. The author of

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Hebrews was saying that what the impression in the wax was to the design on the cylinder, Jesus was to the Father.

When God had finished commanding Moses in the mountain, this man of God gave vent to a basic human longing.

Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." Exodus 33:18

There is within the human heart a longing to discover the glory of God. If this is the case, and it is, then why is it so difficult to satisfy the human longing we all share? Why hasn't that been fulfilled long ago?

In the book of Job, one of the "comforters," Zophar, speaks to the perplexity of our condition when he asked these questions:

Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? Job 11:7

Every person who has ever attempted to contemplate the person of God is quite familiar with the dilemma of which Zophar spoke.

Paul focuses the problem of our search in a doxology he shared with Timothy.

*Who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.
I Timothy 6:16*

To some extent, we stand in awe of rulers. God is the ruler who stands in judgment over all the rulers of the earth, all the rulers of all ages. He is the King who commands every king who occupies a throne. He is the Lord who was and is master of every master of servants in human history. Part of our dilemma is the sheer greatness of our God.

Again, as Paul said, God is uniquely immortal. This dilemma is obvious. How can mere mortals ever fully grasp what it means to be immortal? Someone has said it is like one blind man trying to describe to another blind man what an elephant looks like. God lives in light unapproachable. The word "unapproachable" is "aprositos" or "ἀπρόσιτος" in the Greek, which means inaccessible, one whom we are unworthy to approach. We struggle to penetrate the brightness which inhibits our fuller discovery of God because of the faultiness of our comprehension. Again, Paul speaks impressively to the issue:

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.
Colossians 1:15*

The word for image is "eikon" or "εἰκὼν" in the Greek. This word was used of the representation on a coin or statue. I never saw a man named "Lenin," but having stood in the center of Donetsk, a city in the Ukraine, I saw a statue of him, and will forever be able to identify a picture of the man because of the likeness I saw there.

Jesus is the visible, comprehensible representation of the invisible God.

Another of Paul's beautiful doxologies speaks carefully to our difficulty in discerning the indiscernible.

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Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!
Romans 11:33

The wisdom of God is so deep that our finite minds cannot fully plumb its depths or define His unsearchable judgments. The problem with which we struggle is the shallowness of our mental grasp and the infinity of God's wisdom and knowledge.

Good reasons motivate individuals in their undaunted search to know God. Scripture and history teach us that it is a personal liability to fail to know God intimately. Genesis tells us that our first parents created a historical cataclysm because they did not take their knowledge of God seriously.

The history of Israel is replete with similar examples. God told Israel precisely what He wanted them to do. The nation disobeyed; they did not take the instruction seriously. Israel and the whole world are still dealing with the consequences of that faulty judgment.

In the Scriptures we are commanded to be like God.

I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy because I am holy. Leviticus 11:44

I am unable to obey that instruction unless I know what God is like. I face a failing situation because I am incapable of moving toward the totally incomprehensible. Because this is true, God has revealed Himself in ways which make it possible for us to understand and incorporate our discovery of God into our daily experience.

Finally, it is imperative for God's people to penetrate the brightness which surrounds God's person because of love. God is drawn to us because of His love for us. We are drawn to God because His love draws us and we love Him. Love urges us to discover, ever more clearly, who God is.

The self-revelation of God is a divine effort assisting limited, human minds to gain an understanding of the Unlimited, the One not totally discernible to human comprehension. It is God's gracious concession to our humanity, our finiteness.

This self-revelation takes on many forms. In this study, we will confine our focus to these expressions:

First, the names of God. Though it may not be too clear in some translations, there are many names for God which are used in the Scriptures. The use of a particular name is not a random choice. We will observe that specific names for God are used when certain kinds of activities are being described. When a text describes judgment, a specific name for God is commonly used. When the text describes mercy, however, a different name is used. This suggests that the use of divine names is intentional and specific. This will be our major focus.

The order in which the words of the names of God are written give it a delicate shade of meaning which is slightly different from others. On occasion, two different compound names for God may be made up of the same words, but in different order. This suggests a different emphasis by the author. This is true in more than one situation. It is particularly obvious in names such as "The Lord God" and "God the Lord." This is further complicated by the fact that our English translations use one word to represent two or more different words in the Hebrew.

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If you look at the places where each name is found, it is clear that the different shades of meaning reflect different needs of each context. It does not necessarily reflect the presence of another author or redactor. We need to look carefully at the meaning of the name to see exactly what God has revealed of Himself through the author's word choice.

Secondly, God also revealed Himself through specific teachings and actions. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, God consistently judges evil and eventually rewards righteousness. This fact tells us something specific about God's character and desires.

Thirdly, God also reveals Himself through descriptive statements. In the book of Revelation, John uses this means to give us a picture of Jesus and the Father.

*I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!
And I hold the keys of death and Hades. Revelation 1:18*

Through many different means, God reveals Himself to His people in love. God breaches our dilemma of imperception. He reveals His omnipotence to the powerless. To the finite, whose days are numbered, God withdraws the veil covering His eternity.

There is a revealing promise given by God through the prophet Jeremiah to the people of Judah. God said,

*"Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you **seek me with all your heart**. I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity." Jeremiah 29:12-14a*

Because God describes Himself as changeless, He will be for us what He was for the people of the Old and New Testament. God will do for us as He did for them. I cordially invite you to share with me in this search after God, to discover His brightness.

ELOHIM

God chose this name, Elohim, as the first revelation of His person in the Scripture. This tells us something about the purpose of creation.

Then God (Elohim) said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..."
Genesis 1:26

The name "God", or "Elohim", "אֱלֹהִים" in the Hebrew, refers to the supreme God, the God who is mighty, the very great one who shows mercy. The name "Elohim" is a plural form. This raises several questions:

When the Scriptures repeatedly affirm that there is only one God, why would these Old Testament authors consistently use a plural form for God? Does it mean, as some say, that this is evidence of the trinity? Or, does it mean, as others say, that the authors used the name to show deference, respect, by addressing the king in the plural form?

In an issue of this magnitude, one must speak very carefully. The evidence is given some direction by the fact that in Genesis 1:26 the name "Elohim" is in the plural, but the rest of the sentence is in the singular. Jewish scholars will hold this as evidence that there is one God, not three. Christian scholars usually hold that this is clear reference to the Trinity - three in one.

Because the names of God are found frequently in the Scriptures, one must take special care to distinguish between the name "Jehovah" (יהוה) and "Elohim" (אֱלֹהִים). In the most **general** terms, the two names may be differentiated in these ways:

"Elohim" refers to the powerful God of Mercy.

"Jehovah" refers to the eternal God of Justice.

It will be clear, as we proceed, that there are times when "Elohim" is used in a situation where justice is being meted out. At the same time, there are many instances where the name "Jehovah" is used when mercy is being expressed. Nevertheless, the general understanding is true.

Having made this distinction, we must identify, in more careful terms, what the authors referred to as they used these titles. There are literally several hundred verses in which the name "Elohim" is used. These verses help us to understand who God is and what He does.

THE CHARACTER OF THE GOD OF MERCY

In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth.
Genesis 1:1

God could have chosen to say, "In the beginning **Almighty God** created." This would stress the idea that creation was intended to demonstrate the unique power of God. That was not the case. God said, through the author, "In the beginning God (Elohim-the God of Mercy) created..." There is unique power involved in creation, but the stress is on God's mercy. It is a way of saying God in mercy chose to create the universe and share with us His power.

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Mercy, however, must never be misunderstood for weakness. God is merciful, but He also rules.

The Lord (Jehovah) God (Elohim) took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord (Jehovah) God (Elohim) commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." Genesis 2:15-17

The author appropriately captures the understanding that there is a balance in the mercy of God. It was in love He created, but His law is not less firm.

God's actions also reveal His priorities. God was determined to create and to rule, to control nature and to redeem. He was just as determined, however, to walk with those who love Him. Walking is less an action of the feet than a relationship of the heart.

And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God (Elohim) 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Genesis 5:22

We do not know how, but somehow Enoch learned to walk with God. In Genesis 3:8, God came seeking the fellowship of the pinnacle of His creation - people. Enoch learned to share with God as God had intended at creation. The opportunity of walking with God is as available to us as it was to Enoch. In the flurry of activities of creating, redeeming, forgiving and judging, a top priority in the mind of God is still that personal relationship of walking with His people.

In the midst of God's self-disclosure as "Elohim", the God of Mercy, there are a number of pictures of God which describe what that means to us.

In Genesis you will find these words:

Then God (Elohim) 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." Genesis 1:26

This is evidence of a power that is generous with His authority. He purposes to share His power to rule with the people whom He created.

Again the author of Genesis quotes God,

Then God (Elohim) said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food." Genesis 1:29

This suggests the provident nature of God. He did not just create us, but carefully provided for our every need.

After more than a century of patiently enduring the rebellion of His creation, God brought judgment upon that creation.

Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, male and female came to

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Noah and entered the ark, as God (Elohim) had commanded Noah. And after the seven days, the floodwaters came on the earth. Genesis 7:6-10

Notice, however, that God prepared a safe place for Noah, his family and the animals, even when He was about to destroy the evil ones. God showed great mercy in the midst of the necessary judgment He had to use. This is primary to an understanding of who God is.

Jacob said to Rachel and Leah, his wives,

I see that your father's attitude toward me is not what it was before, but the God (Elohim) of my father has been with me. Genesis 31:5

The reference to "the God of my father" is much the same as the Scriptural formula " the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." It is a reference to the fact that God is eternal. He was present before creation and after creation ceases, God will not have changed.

In the same chapter, God said,

I am the God (Elohim) of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land. Genesis 31:13

This is a picture of Elohim who faithfully kept His promise and covenant He made with Jacob at Bethel. Prior to this verse, in Genesis 28:10-22, God promised to make Jacob great in Canaan. Now in a time of stress, God remembered His promise. In this context, God pointed out to Jacob that the mating process was taking place in such a way that the strongest and greatest number of young sheep and goats were being born streaked, speckled and spotted. This meant that these animals would belong to Jacob, not Laban. God is faithful.

Jacob spoke to Esau about the graciousness of God.

Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God (Elohim) has been gracious to me and I have all I need. And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it. Genesis 33:11

The word "gracious" is "chanan," חָנַן in Hebrew, which means to incline toward, to express kindness to an inferior, to bend or stoop as in the care of a child. Elohim, the God of Mercy, is all of that. He is gracious.

Joseph spoke of God in a very special way when he resisted the invitations of Potiphar's wife.

No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God (Elohim)? Genesis 39:9

In the book of Judges there is a picture of the long-suffering of God. Each time God delivered them, they returned to their evil ways. Nevertheless, God continued to hear and deliver when they cried out in distress.

Exodus 34 portrays God (Elohim) as a jealous husband.

Do not worship any other god (elohim), for the Lord (Jehovah) whose name is jealous, is a jealous God (Elohim). Exodus 34:14

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The word "jealous" is "qannah" or "קָנָה" in the Hebrew and means jealous, angry with protection, to hold to oneself. As a husband protects his relationship with his wife, so God is jealous, in a positive sense, of His relationship with His people.

Another view of Elohim shows Him as a powerful God.

When they learned that the ark of the Lord (Jehovah) had come into the camp, the Philistines were afraid. "A god (elohim) has come into the camp," they said, "We're in trouble! Nothing like this has happened before. Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods (elohim)?" I Samuel 4:6b-8

When the Ark was among the Philistines, devastation happened wherever it was taken and they realized this great power was again turned against them.

This powerful God enters into personal relationships with His people.

This is what the Lord (Jehovah), the God (Elohim) of Israel, says: "I brought Israel up out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed you. But you have now rejected your God (Elohim), who saves you out of all your calamities and distresses. And you have said 'No, set a king over us.' So now present yourselves before the Lord (Jehovah) by your tribes and clans." I Samuel 10:18,-19

Though God is the creator and controller of the universe, He also enters into very personal relationships. The risk of personal relationships is that they can be rejected. God leaves Himself open to this risk of rejection in order to sustain an honest relationship with us.

David had entered into covenant with Jonathan concerning how things would be when he was king and Saul's family was no longer in power. David said,

Is there no one still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show God's (Elohim) kindness? II Samuel 9:3

David understood that his greatest kindness to Jonathan's crippled son was something like the kindness of God. With all his faults, David knew God very well.

It is not a contradiction to say that God is a God of Mercy, and then say He is also a God of Justice. Nehemiah understood this very well.

You warned them to return to your law, but they became arrogant and disobeyed your commands. They sinned against your ordinances, by which a man will live if he obeys them. Stubbornly they turned their backs on you, became stiff-necked and refused to listen. For many years you were patient with them. By your spirit you admonished them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you handed them over to the neighboring peoples. But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God (Elohim). Nehemiah 9:29-31

Nehemiah was able to see that God had shown great patience and longsuffering with Israel. The time had come when His holiness demanded that judgment be given. Even in

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His judgment, God was merciful. Judgment was not a venting of the divine anger so much as it was an effort to move Israel back to Himself.

In Psalm 7, David prayed under threatening circumstances. He trusted God to do right and in effect asked Him to judge his actions, that if he had done wrong, then let his enemies succeed.

O righteous God, (Elohim) who searches minds and hearts, bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure. My shield is God (Elohim) Most High, who saves the upright in heart. Psalm 7:9, 10

What a commitment! David knew that God was a righteous God. He could be trusted to judge him fairly.

In Psalm 36, David reflects on the designs of the wicked. In spite of these evil plans, David can rejoice.

How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your rivers of delight. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. Psalm 36:7-9

David can speak of God's unfailing love, His bountiful provision, His righteousness and justice. These are the ingredients of God's lovingkindness and David had experienced them all many times.

Again, in Psalm 86, David reflects on his knowledge of God. He was aware that the greatness of God's power had no equal in all the world. At the same time, God's loving concern and compassion were as great as His power.

But you, O Lord (Jehovah), are a compassionate and gracious God (Elohim), slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Turn to me and have mercy on me; grant your strength to your servant and save the son of your maidservant. Psalm 86:15, 16

There are those who are strong, but have no compassion. They are frightening. There are those who are compassionate, but powerless. They are not helpful. God, in the total expression of His power, is full of compassion for those in their need.

The minor prophets are not usually thought of as showing tenderness. Malachi is no exception. In spite of this, he shows a tender spirit even in his denunciations.

"You place defiled food on my altar. But you ask, 'How have we defiled you?' "By saying that the Lord's table is contemptible. When you bring blind animals for sacrifice is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong. Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the Lord Almighty. "Now implore God (Elohim) to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?" says the Lord Almighty. Malachi 1:7-9

Malachi chastised them for bringing blind, crippled and diseased animals as sacrifices to God. They knew better. They knew that only the very best, the flawless animal was good enough to be a gift to God. There is sarcasm in Malachi's denunciation as he said, "Try

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offering them to your governor!" The reference to the governor put the whole experience in a perspective they could understand very well.

Yet, Malachi concludes this scathing attack on their devious attitude toward the tithe and the table of God by urging them to implore God to be gracious. Malachi knew God was a firm judge, but he also knew that underneath the firm justice was the tender heart of a gracious God.

THE ACTIONS OF THE GOD OF MERCY

For many, the mention of the God of Mercy conjures up an image of the meek, the weak and helpless. Fortunately, this is not the case. In the hundreds of verses in which this name appears, there is a host of things that God does. We can gain a glimpse of His character and purpose as we review His deeds.

God does not divide life into neat categories of spiritual and physical. God views all of life from a spiritual perspective. This is very clear in the books of the Old Testament.

There is a natural series of events which one can anticipate in the circumstances of life. If an army captures a city, no one will be surprised if they break down the walls, burn the building, take the stored food, kill the men and ravish the women. There is evidence in Scripture, however, that God became involved in this process and altered what would otherwise have taken place. This was true even when God was the One who destroyed the city.

So when God (Elohim) destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived. Genesis 19:29

Another example of this is found in the Exodus. God ordained that the firstborn of people and animals would die throughout the land. God interrupted that process by making provision for the firstborn of Israel to escape this tragedy.

When the kings came from the North and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, taking Lot and his family captive (Genesis 14), God enabled Abraham and his small band of men to defeat these kings and rescue Lot.

In the story of Joseph, there is an outstanding illustration of the intervention of God into civic events. All through his life, it seems that everyone he met used Joseph poorly. The climax of the book of Genesis, the ultimate picture of the sovereignty of God, took place when the patriarch Israel had died and his sons feared Joseph's revenge. He said to them,

"Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God (Elohim) intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. Genesis 50:19-21

On one occasion, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was waging war in one city after another in Palestine. He sent messengers to talk to the soldiers on the wall of Jerusalem, to undermine their morale by saying:

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

Who of all the gods (elohim) of these nations that my fathers destroyed has been able to save his people from me? How then can your god (Elohim) deliver you from my hand? II Chronicles 32:14

Under any other circumstances it would have been appropriate for Sennacherib to make this claim. He forgot one thing. Despite his military superiority, God had decreed that Hezekiah should survive this attack. Sennacherib's officer had described this situation in spiritual terms by pointing out what Sennacherib had done to the idols of the other nations. He asked what the God of Israel could do to deliver them from the hand of Sennacherib. This was now a spiritual battle and God would demonstrate that He would be victor over idols and infidels, as the following verse in II Chronicles verifies:

And the Lord sent an angel, who annihilated all the fighting men and the leaders and officers in the camp of the Assyrian king. So he withdrew to his own land in disgrace. And when he went into the temple of his god, some of his sons cut him down with the sword. II Chronicles 32:21

God delivers His people from proud kings who trust only in their weapons and their idols.

When it appeared that Saul had cornered David so that he could finally get rid of him, God intervened. Saul was determined to exterminate David, but God was determined to make David king. Of course, God prevailed. David reflected on this in Psalm 18.

He is the God (Elohim) who avenges me, who saves me from my enemies. You exalted me above my foes; from violent men you rescued me. Psalm 18:47, 48

Avenging is a passionate act of overturning the evil designs of one's enemies and in some instances doing worse to them. God is the avenger of His people.

God also intrudes in the decisions of nations to give favor to His people. There are several biblical illustrations of this truth.

Now God (Elohim) had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel. Daniel 1:9

Three Hebrew men had taken a stand that placed them on collision course with Nebuchadnezzar. The king demanded that they bow down and worship him. They refused. God had to rescue them from the furnace, and He did (Daniel 3:29).

God also judges the nations and His people. The army of Israel started treating the Ark like a good luck charm, and God allowed the Philistines to capture it. They viewed this as a victory for their god Dagan over the God of Israel. But God humiliated their worship of Dagan and brought sickness upon anyone in whose care the Ark was placed (I Samuel 6:20). Elohim is the God of Mercy, but He judges the nations who stand against Him or seek to harm His people.

God is the protector of the helpless. Joseph, of course, is another illustration of this truth. Joseph's brothers tried to get rid of him because of their jealous anger. God took this evil design and used it as a way to protect the very ones who wanted to harm His choice servant Joseph.

But God (Elohim) sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance" Genesis 45:7

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

Were He not the God of Mercy, God might have made Joseph great and destroyed the brothers, but He didn't. In the same way, God protects us, especially when we do not deserve it.

Because Elohim is God, He is the recipient of the worship and adoration of His people.

Then God (Elohim) said to Jacob, "Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God (Elohim), who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau." Genesis 35:1

God does many things. At the heart of every deed and relationship is the desire to receive the praise and adoration of His people.

At the time of the giving of the Ten Commandments, Moses spoke to the people.

Do not be afraid, God (Elohim) has come to test you, so that the fear of God (Elohim) will be with you to keep you from sinning. Exodus 20:20

There is a difference between testing and tempting. The difference lies in the intent. A temptation is a tool of the enemy to destroy one's faith. A test is a tool of God designed to show us our own strength or weakness in order to help us grow in faith. God **tests** His people to help them grow.

The God of Mercy is a God who loves. When the Queen of Sheba visited Solomon, she exalted the greatness of his kingdom and rule, and she spoke of God in these words:

Praise be to the LORD your God (Elohim), who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne as king to rule for the Lord (Jehovah) your God (Elohim). Because of the love of your God (Elohim) for Israel and his desire to uphold them forever, he has made you king over them to maintain justice and righteousness. II Chronicles 9:8

She was acclaiming God (Elohim) as the God who loves Israel.

Nehemiah returned to the devastated city of Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. Neighboring people, however, did not want to see the walls rebuilt. They threatened to attack. Nehemiah knew that they had to spread out across the city in order to work on the wall. They also needed to be as close to each other as possible for mutual protection.

Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God (Elohim) will fight for us! Nehemiah 4:20

Nehemiah was convinced that rebuilding the wall was the Lord's doing. He expected God to fight for them against their enemies.

The God of Mercy also leads His people. He instructs them concerning the things they should do.

So my God (Elohim) put it into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials and the common people for registration by families. I found the genealogical record of those who had been the first to return. Nehemiah 7:5

This registration is an act of mercy, not a rigid control.

Because of the way God deals with us, He is the source of our hope.

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God (Elohim), for I will yet praise him, my savior and my God (Elohim). Psalm 42:5

God is also the source of our joy.

Then I will go to the altar of God, (Elohim), to God (El), my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the harp, O God (Elohim), my God (Elohim). Psalm 43:4

God is the security of His people.

God (Elohim) is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea. Psalms 46:1, 2

Isaiah understood the parental quality of God.

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God (Elohim). Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for. Isaiah 40:1, 2a

If we reflect upon the character and actions of God, we can detect some helpful information:

- The character of the God of Mercy is reflected in His actions. There is no contradiction between the character and the actions of God. There is no trait of His character that is missing in His actions, and the actions of God reflect no trait inconsistent with His character and His mercy.
- There is no character trait of the God of Mercy which cannot be reflected in the lives of His people.
- There is no action of the God of Mercy which He cannot reflect in the lives of His people if they are willing to be used by Him without limitation or restriction.

His name is Elohim.

ADONAI

Then Abraham spoke up again: "Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord (Adonai), though I am nothing but dust and ashes, what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?" Genesis 18:27, 28

These verses were taken from Abraham's dickering with God concerning the number of righteous to be found in the city of Sodom when God said He was going to destroy it. The word "Lord," in the text, is "Adonai" or "אֲדֹנָי" in the Hebrew, and means owner, master. In the Ugaritic, a language which represents a northwestern semitic language group, the word "Adonai" also means "lord", and sometimes even "father." Again, in the Akkadian, the language of another semitic group of people, the word means "the mighty one. "

There are some definite patterns in the Biblical use of the word "Adonai."

- In Genesis through Song of Solomon there is only an occasional use of the name of "Adonai." In these books the name "Lord" usually identifies "Jehovah."
- In Isaiah through Malachi the use of the name "Adonai" far surpasses the use of the name "Jehovah." In the King James version, however, both are translated "Lord."
- In Isaiah through Malachi, "Adonai" is almost always used along with "Jehovah" and is translated "Sovereign Lord" in the New International Version. It is usually an expression of devastating power against evil, and the name "Adonai Jehovah" is usually used as an announcement of pending doom - "Thus saith the Adonai Jehovah."
- The word "Lord", "Adonai," is used to identify God in Scripture, but in Genesis through Job, it identifies many people as well:
 - a. Eliezar - a slave f. Joseph k. Boaz
 - b. Laban g. Moses l. Eli
 - c. Esau h. Eglon m. Saul
 - d. Potiphar i. Sisera n. David
 - e. Pharaoh j. Abraham

Again, in Psalm 136 you will find these words:

Give thanks to the LORD (Adonai) of lords (Adonai): His love endures forever. Psalm 136:3

The Hebrew words here are "Adon ha adonim" or "אֲדֹנָי הָאֲדֹנִים". This means the "LORD of Lords," "master of Masters." The word "Adonai" is used concerning God over 300 times.

"Adonai" is the very personal name of God. The author is emphasizing the fact that the might of God's power is being exercised, that God is in control.

Remember, we are the bond-servants of God and because of that God is our "Adonai," controlling us as a master controls his servants.

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

Because of the greatness invested in the name, when our Hebrew friends come to the name "יהוה" or "Jehovah," as they read their Torah scrolls, they usually substitute the name "Adonai" for "Jehovah" because the latter is considered to be the unspeakable name.

God is the master and we are His servants; we live and work at the disposal of our master. A servant is totally controlled by the wishes of his owner. There is nothing that the servant, especially a bond-servant, would not attempt on behalf of his master. All that is true of the Palestinian servants, describes our own relationship to God. He is our owner. He decides how He would have us invest our lives. There should be nothing that is beyond our willingness to attempt on behalf of our Master, God, the "Adonai."

SOVEREIGN LORD, GOD OF ISRAEL

In Exodus 34, God used the name "The Sovereign Lord, the God of Israel" concerning Himself.

Three times a year all your men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD, the God of Israel. Exodus 34:23

God referred to Himself in these terms - "The Sovereign Lord, the God of Israel," or "hadon Jehovah elohe Israel", "הַדוֹן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל" in the Hebrew. As you can see, this name is made up of three different names for God.

- **Sovereign** - "Adon" - (אֲדוֹן) - This name highlights God as the Sovereign one. It describes a master who controls others.
- **LORD** - "Jehovah" - (יְהוָה) - refers to God as the self-existent one, the eternal judge. This name is more completely described in chapter six.
- **God of Israel** - "Elohe Israel" - (אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) - This is a term of deference, of awe and respect and is often used in situations requiring mercy. It identifies a magistrate, a sovereign, the supreme God. The addition of the word "Israel," personalizes this name. He is the God who watches over Israel in mercy.

Together, these names stress three things about God's nature:

- God is Sovereign - Adon
- God is the self-existent, Eternal Judge - Jehovah
- God is the supreme God of Mercy - Elohe

God speaks of Himself as the Sovereign, who is self-existent, an eternal judge who shows mercy! The major emphasis, of course, is on the Sovereign Master.

Now, look at the context in which God used these names. Moses was taking the second pair of stone tablets into the mountain. The men of Israel had been required to come before the Lord because Israel had sinned, by making a golden calf, at the very moment God had given the law. God now volunteered to make a covenant with His people. He asked only obedience from the Israelites as He promised to drive the inhabitants out of the land, and this in spite of Israel's history of disobedience!

With this in mind, we can understand why God referred to Himself as the Sovereign, yet merciful judge who was committed to His people Israel. It is because He is the Master who is merciful.

There are times in every Christian's life when we are at less than our best. The grace of God reaches out to us especially when we are having the most difficulty with obedience. This great power and mercy of God touches our lives when we deserve it least. He is still "the Sovereign Lord, the God of Israel."

SOVEREIGN LORD

In the Hebrew, one of the names for God is Sovereign Lord and is made up of two words: Adonai and Elohim.

- **Sovereign** - "Adonai" (אֲדֹנָי) - This name comes from a root word which means to rule. It refers to a sovereign, a controller. It describes the lord, master, owner, the powerful one. It is the name by which God was most commonly known. It is translated "LORD" in some translations.
- **LORD** - "Jehovah" (יְהוָה) - This is the unspeakable name for God. It is unspeakable because it is too holy to be used by fallen human beings. In this way, the name stresses the holiness of God. The name "Jehovah" is repeatedly used to identify God in situations where justice is involved.

When these two names are combined, the Biblical authors stress the following qualities:

- Adonai suggests sovereignty and power.
- Jehovah emphasizes the holiness and eternal nature of God and is used to highlight situations involving judgment.

The order in which the two names are used, Sovereign LORD, suggests that the authors placed major emphasis, in this instance, on God's sovereign, ruling power, and lesser emphasis on God's eternal holiness and justice.

It is not surprising that Moses chose this compound name when he reported his prayer to Israel. He said:

"O Sovereign (Adonai) LORD (Jehovah), you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works that you do?"
Deuteronomy 3:24.

He was reporting to Israel that he had encouraged Joshua to remember what God had done to the other kingdoms and that the "Sovereign LORD" (Adonai Jehovah) would do to the kingdoms in the land what He had done to kingdoms they had faced previously.

He used the name again when he pleaded with God to show His mercy by not destroying His people. He said:

I prayed to the LORD (Jehovah) and said, "O Sovereign (Adonai) LORD (Jehovah), do not destroy your people, your own inheritance,..."
Deuteronomy 9:26a

In this quotation, Moses was reporting how he had pleaded with the Sovereign LORD (Adonai Jehovah) to refrain from destroying the people of Israel. This was an appropriate prayer because the people deserved the judgment of God and God had the power to rule and impose judgment upon His people.

David used this compound name to acclaim God as his hope and confidence. Observe the way David wrote,

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

For you have been my hope, O Sovereign (Adonai) Lord (Jehovah), my confidence since my youth. Psalm 71:5

David appealed to the power, which enabled God to reign and judge, to describe the source of his hope and confidence.

Asaph used this name to describe God as his refuge and his security.

But as for me, it is good to be near God (Elohim). I have made the Sovereign (Adonai) LORD (Jehovah) my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds. Psalm 73:28

As Asaph contemplated the names of God, he realized that the Sovereign LORD was a refuge, a place of safety for the people of God. It was not **just** that God made him feel safe; God did what was necessary for him to feel secure.

Isaiah acclaims the God of Sovereign Power by saying,

The Sovereign (Adonai) LORD (Jehovah) will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD (Jehovah) has spoken. Isaiah 25:8

Isaiah knew that Adonai Jehovah was able to wipe away all the traces of sorrow. God was concerned with more than sorrow. He dealt with the problems that cause us disgrace. He used His power to bring a solution to the pain of every human life.

There is another facet, however, to the Biblical description of the meaning of Sovereign LORD. It has to do with the power of our Sovereign LORD to show Himself strong in control of kings and nations.

From Isaiah to Zechariah, each prophet used the name "Sovereign LORD." Each prophet announced the judgment of God with these memorable words, "This is what the Sovereign Lord says,..." It is a way of saying that the God of Sovereign Power will not only reward obedience, but will also bring swift judgment against sin.

In the compound name of "Adonai Jehovah," God revealed the sovereign, eternal holiness of His power. The circumstances in which this name is used add even greater emphasis to this glimpse of who God is.

In a world where people who hurt others, seem to prosper and gain the upper hand, where people who celebrate evil, seem to hold power, we need to remember that He is the Sovereign LORD. When thriving nations seem to be doing everything wrong, remember that He rules in power above every nation under the heavens. He is our Sovereign LORD.

THE LORD, THE LORD ALMIGHTY

In the Hebrew, the compound name "Lord God Almighty" is "Adonai Jehovah Sabaoth," (אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת). These three words form a unique understanding of who God is.

LORD - "Adonai" - (אֲדֹנָי), comes from a root word which means to rule, a sovereign, the one who controls, the lord, master, owner. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, it is the word "κύριος" or "Lord." It is the most common name for Jesus in the New Testament. For a fuller picture of the meaning of this name, see chapter two, which deals with the name "Adonai."

LORD - "Jehovah" - (יְהוָה), is the name of the self-existent, the eternal one, and the name is often used in a context involving judgment. This name is dealt with more fully in chapter six.

Almighty - "Sabaoth" - (צְבָאוֹת) comes from the root word which means to assemble an army, to fight, to perform. It was used as a synonym for the gathered army.

In the New International Version, the phrase "of hosts" is usually translated "Almighty." In the combination of the three words described above, the author is dealing with these emphases:

- Adonai stresses the ruler or sovereign.
- Jehovah stresses the eternal judge.
- Sabaoth stresses the waging of battle.

Because of the order in which the words were used, the author's focus was on God as the sovereign ruler. In a previous part of this study, we looked at the name "LORD Almighty." In that scenario, the author focused on the eternal God who judges evil. The difference between "the LORD Almighty" and "the LORD, the LORD Almighty." is that "the LORD Almighty" draws attention to God as judge; "the LORD, the LORD Almighty" draws attention to God as the eternal judge, the sovereign ruler prepared for battle.

Among the more than 30 occurrences of this name, several areas of sovereignty are highlighted.

*This is what the LORD (Adonai), the LORD (Jehovah) Almighty (Sabaoth), says: "Go, say to this steward, to Shebna, who is in charge of the palace..."
Isaiah 22:15*

The LORD, the LORD Almighty is the sovereign ruler of the universe. He **commands** the prophet to convey a message. It is a royal image in that God commands the prophet the way a king sends an ambassador.

This sovereign ruler's tremendous commitment to justice is visible in at least 18 of the more than 30 occurrences of this name, of which the following is an example:

But that day belongs to the LORD (Adonai), the LORD (Jehovah) Almighty (Sabaoth) - a day of vengeance for vengeance of his foes. The sword will devour till it is satisfied, till it has quenched its thirst with blood. For the LORD (Adonai), the LORD (Jehovah) Almighty (Sabaoth), will offer sacrifice in the land of the north by the River Euphrates. Jeremiah 46:10

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

At times, the name "the LORD, the LORD Almighty" is translated "the LORD God of Hosts" in other translations. This sovereign powerful ruler is committed to justice. He will severely punish His people when they do evil, and He will destroy nations who deal unjustly with His people.

Isaiah repeatedly used this name for Gld.

See now, the LORD (Adonai), the LORD (Jehovah) Almighty (Sabaoth), is about to take from Jerusalem and Judah both supply and support: all supplies of food and all supplies of water, the hero and warrior, the judge and prophet, the soothsayer and elder, the captain of fifty and man of rank, the counselor, skilled craftsman and clever enchanter. Isaiah 3:3

In Isaiah 10:16-18, there is a picture which is even more dramatic. In vivid detail, Isaiah describes how the LORD, the LORD Almighty" will so completely destroy the forests that a little child could count the trees. That is true devastation!

Some might wonder why the "LORD, the LORD Almighty" would resort to such force. The answer is in the character of God. Our God is Adonai - the master who will discipline - and Jehovah - the Eternal Judge. God, however, is also Elohim - the God of Mercy. There is something in our nature which will focus in on God's mercy and forget His judgment and discipline. It happened in Old Testament times and it happens now. In the name "the Lord, the Lord Almighty" God has given us a vivid, dramatic reminder that his judgment and discipline are as strong as His mercy.

The prophet Amos speaks of the LORD, the LORD Almighty in very graphic terms.

The LORD (Adonai), the LORD (Jehovah) Almighty (Sabaoth), he who touches the earth and it melts, and all who live in it mourn - the whole land rises like the Nile, then sinks like the river of Egypt. Amos 9:5

Think of how the disobedient ones felt when they heard Amos talk about "the LORD, the LORD Almighty" as the one who touches the earth and it melted. In the very next verse, he spoke of God again as the one who created the universe, the one who controls even the weather. The same theme is stressed concerning this name in Amos 4:13. This is power of the highest order.

Several Psalms, written by David, Asaph and the Sons of Korah, contain a plea to the LORD, the LORD Almighty. In Psalm 69:6, David pleaded with God to help him so that those who wait for Him would not be ashamed. In Psalm 80:4, Asaph pleaded with the LORD, the LORD Almighty to hear the prayers of His people. Again in Psalm 80:19, Asaph pleaded with the LORD, the LORD Almighty to restore His people. In Psalm 84:8, the author from among the Sons of Korah pleaded with the LORD, the LORD Almighty concerning the temple. They all turned to the LORD, the LORD Almighty, the Sovereign, Eternal Judge, who wages battle, when they needed help!

It was the Lord, the Lord Almighty who encouraged Isaiah.

Therefore, this is what the LORD (Adonai), the LORD (Jehovah) Almighty (Sabaoth), says: "O my people who live in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrians, who beat you with a rod and lift up a club against you as Egypt did." Isaiah 10:24

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

Israel lived in terror of the Assyrians. The LORD, the LORD Almighty instructed the prophet to have no fear of them. This is not an attempt to command an end to fear. That does not happen. It is God's way to share with the prophet that His sovereign power is greater than their terrorizing enemies - the Assyrians.

Reflect on this section. Notice that each section focuses our attention on the qualities of the LORD, the LORD Almighty:

- His royal power
- His authority
- His control over all things
- His power over His enemies

This is a self revelation of God which offers us a glimpse into the greatness of His character. It is a glimpse of God which is in some sense different from that spotlighted in any other name. It places added emphasis on God's royal power and authority more intensely than other names of God.

If the LORD, the LORD Almighty has these qualities, **then** we must decide how we will respond to this glimpse of His greatness. The power described in the name "the Lord, the Lord Almighty" is awesome. Can our response be anything less?

LORD ALMIGHTY

In several different forms, there are 235 uses of the name "Jehovah Almighty" or "Lord Almighty." We will look at each of the forms.

The Hebrew form of this name is as follows:

LORD - "Jehovah" - (יהוה) - This name is described in more detail in chapter six. For our purposes here, we need to be reminded that this name stresses two things:

- God is eternal
- This name is frequently used in contexts dealing with divine judgment.

Almighty - "saba" - (שָׁבָא) - this is the root form from which "Sabaoth" is derived, meaning host - a mass of people organized for battle, a symbol of irresistible power.

There are 194 references to this name in the Old Testament. The name does not appear prior to the book of I Samuel, but does appear in almost every prophetic writing. It is used in a number of different ways.

In Isaiah 13, the prophet Isaiah saw an oracle, a vision.

Listen, a noise on the mountains, like that of a great multitude! Listen, an uproar among the kingdoms, like nations massing together! the LORD (Jehovah) Almighty is mustering an army for war. Isaiah 13:4

In this verse, the prophet uses this name to describe the power of God over nations and armies to cause them to do battle against the disobedient.

The most common usage of this name is found in Jeremiah and many of the minor prophets.

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

"And you will know that I have sent you this admonition so that my covenant with Levi may continue," says the LORD (Jehovah) Almighty. Malachi 2:4

In the host of instances where the name is used in this way, the prophet added it to a prophetic statement much like a badge of power. It was like signing the name of the President of the United States to a document. It represents an unusual power.

The prophet Isaiah used the name "LORD Almighty" in still another way.

The LORD (Jehovah) Almighty will come with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with windstorm and tempest and flames of a devouring fire. Isaiah 9:6

The images upon which Isaiah focuses are those of unusual power. There is no way to turn off thunder or stop an earthquake. The power of Jehovah is like that.

Jeremiah also used this name to describe power.

He who is the portion of Jacob is not like these, for he is the maker of all things, including Israel, the tribe of his inheritance - the LORD (Jehovah) Almighty (Sabaoth) is his name. Jeremiah 10:16

A person's name is like his/her finger print. The name identifies their personality and power. To say "Jehovah of Hosts" or "the LORD Almighty is his name" is to apply the meaning of the name to the person. Power is what this name is all about.

Zechariah used this name to describe authority.

So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD (Jehovah) to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD (Jehovah) Almighty (Sabaoth)." Zechariah 4:6

The message of God was announced and then the prophet adds this statement, "Says the **LORD Almighty** (Jehovah of Hosts)". It is like Zechariah saying, "This is the authority by which I make this statement" when he had been thinking in terms of solving political problems. God's message was intended to shift the focus from solving problems by power to solving problems by God's presence.

Isaiah used the name in yet a different direction.

On this mountain the LORD (Jehovah) Almighty (Sabaoth) will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine - the best of meats and the finest of wines. Isaiah 25:6

Through Isaiah, God spoke to His people. He promised the protection of Judah and the destruction of enemies. Isaiah promised that the LORD Almighty (Jehovah of Hosts) would provide a feast for His people. It would be a time of joy and plenty, not a time of fear and survival mentality.

Jeremiah, on the other hand, used the name in the opposite way.

Therefore, this is what the LORD Almighty (Jehovah Sabaoth) says concerning the prophets: "I will make them eat bitter food and drink poisoned water, because from the prophets of Jerusalem ungodliness has spread throughout the land." Jeremiah 23:15

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

This is a pronouncement of judgment upon the false prophets. Jeremiah attributed it to the LORD Almighty (Jehovah of Hosts).

Jeremiah also used the name "LORD Almighty" in a context of praise.

The sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, and the voices of those who bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD, saying, "Give thanks to the LORD (Jehovah) Almighty, for the LORD (Jehovah) is good; his love endures for ever." Jeremiah 33:11

The fact that God was "LORD Almighty" was cause for the prophet to instruct the people to give thanks and praise.

Jeremiah also used this name in the announcement of a promise.

'In that day,' declares the LORD (Jehovah) Almighty, 'I will break the yoke off their necks and will tear off their bonds; no longer will foreigners enslave them. Instead, they will serve the LORD (Jehovah) their God (Elohim) and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.' Jeremiah 30:8

The name LORD Almighty was used to lend credibility to a fantastic promise. You will find the same situation in Zechariah 1:17.

LORD ALMIGHTY GOD

This name is quite interesting in its Hebrew form. It combines two separate names for God.

LORD - "Jehovah" (יהוה) - This name is described more fully in chapter six. It stresses the fact that God is eternal. It is often used in contexts which deal with judgment.

Almighty - (of Hosts) "saba" (סבא) is a root word from which the word "Sabaoth" is derived. It was used to describe a mass of people. It was also used to identify an army, a force to wage war and cause destruction.

God - "Elohim" (אלהים) - this name, described in chapter one, focuses upon God's majesty and mercy. It is interesting that the "God of Mercy" is identified with the army of Israel.

Observe the context in which this compound name is used.

"And now LORD (Jehovah) God (Elohim), keep forever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house. Do as you promised, so that your name will be great forever. Then men will say, 'The LORD (Jehovah) Almighty (tsaba) is God (Elohim) over Israel!' And the house of your servant David will be established before you. II Samuel 7:25, 26

It is a context in which the armed forces of David were threatened. David believed that if the army of Israel was defeated, the name of God would be shamed. In this prayer, David summons the greatness of God to keep the promise made to him and the trustworthiness of the name of God would be maintained, the honor of God as sovereign would be defended.

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In this compound form, a double picture is presented. The Almighty Eternal God of Judgment is pictured as an army ready to destroy the enemy.

At the same time, God is presented as the God of Mercy who has covenanted His love upon Israel. This double picture is necessary. God is the judge of nations. At the same time, God is the merciful king who longs to show mercy to His chosen people, Israel.

This is important because people tend to see only one of these facets of the divine nature. That would be an unfortunate image of who God is. He is the loving judge, the lover who chastises.

LORD ALMIGHTY, THE MIGHTY ONE OF ISRAEL

This name looks similar to the previous name, but in the Hebrew it is different. The Hebrew name is much more precise.

Therefore the LORD (Adonai), the LORD (Jehovah) Almighty (Sabaoth), the Mighty One (Abbiyr) of Israel, declares: "Ah, I will get relief from my foes and avenge myself on my enemies." Isaiah 1:24

As the prophet ascribes his words to God, he uses these names:

Lord - "adonai" - (אֲדֹנָי) - as indicated before, comes from the root which means to rule. It is a sovereign who controls life. We dealt with this at length in chapter two.

LORD Almighty - "Jehovah sabaoth" - (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת) - As we have indicated previously, the name "Jehovah" focuses on the eternal nature of God and was often used in contexts which involved judgment. The name "sabaoth" emphasizes the presence of a devastating force, like that of an army. Added to the name Jehovah, "sabaoth" stresses the devastation which will be expressed in the judgment of God.

Mighty one of Israel - the word "mighty", "abbiyr" (אֲבִייר) means mighty, chiefest, stout hearted, valiant. The word was sometimes used to describe the power and undaunted nature of a bull, or the power of an angel. When applied to God, this name speaks of Him as the valiant one on behalf of Israel in their weakness.

Typical of Jewish writing, emphasis is achieved through repetition and the use of near synonyms. In Isaiah 1:24, as quoted above, the prophet spoke on behalf of God. Isaiah denounced the rebellion and evil conduct of the people of Jerusalem.

The message of these verses is that God will avenge Himself of the disobedient and the enemy. He promised to turn against the people of Jerusalem, purge them and place judges over them again. This was for the purpose of restoring them to faithfulness and righteousness.

Isaiah used this name to show Jerusalem that God was a powerful judge; He was able to punish as a general punishes those who do battle against him. This punishment, however, was corrective rather than punitive.

God chose this special name, LORD Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, to convey a specific insight about Himself. Compare this name with the previous name - "LORD Almighty, God of Israel."

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LORD Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel	LORD Almighty, God of Israel
LORD - (Adonai) - powerful master	LORD - (Adonai) - powerful master
LORD - (Jehovah) - eternal judge	LORD - Jehovah- eternal judge
Almighty - describes an army, a force to fight and destroy	Almighty - describes an army, a force to fight and destroy
Mighty One - valiant one, undaunted one who fights on behalf of Israel	God - (Elohim) - God of Mercy of Israel

As you compare these names, you will notice several things:

- Both names stress power.
- "The LORD, Almighty, God of Israel" uses two words to place great stress on power - "Adonai" and "Almighty." However, "LORD Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel", uses three different words - "Adonai," "Almighty" and "Mighty", placing much greater emphasis on unrelenting power and showing identity with Israel.
- "LORD Almighty, God of Israel" mentions power, but in the context of judgment and in tension with mercy.

There are times when we need to be reminded that the mercy and judgment of God are in tension with each other. We need to become more aware of His judgment which He sends not to destroy us, but to point us toward His forgiving mercy.

All of us have known those unending seasons of life when except for the power of God, we would have thrown in the towel. Unfortunately, during those times we just gritted our teeth and held on. When the clouds of life are doubly dark, we need to remember that we serve the Master, the LORD Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel.

LORD ALMIGHTY, GOD OF ISRAEL

This too is a compound name for God. It is made up as follows:

LORD - "Jehovah" - (יהוה) - This name, as described in chapter six, stresses the fact that God is eternal (faithful) and is consistently found in situations relating to judgment.

Almighty - "sabaoth" - (צבאות) Again, this portion of the name describes unbelievable force. It is regularly used to describe an army which annihilates. The major image is that of devastation.

God - "Elohim" - (אלהים) - This name, as described more fully in chapter one, focuses attention on the majesty of God and His mercy.

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of Israel - Elohim is the God of Mercy who identifies Himself with Israel. The focus, in this part of the name, is on the fact that God showers this mercy on Israel by defending them against evil nations, and blessing His people with abundance.

We need to differentiate between the "Lord Almighty God," as described on page 29, and the "Lord Almighty, God of Israel." "The Lord Almighty God" focuses primary attention on God who is The Eternal God of Judgment and the Majestic God of Mercy. "The Lord Almighty, God of Israel" focuses its primary attention on the Powerful, Eternal God of Justice who is the Merciful God watching over Israel. The major difference is in the personal aspect of His nature. He is the God who has chosen to watch over Israel.

There are at least 30 passages where this name can be found. We will consider only one of these.

O LORD (Jehovah) Almighty (Sabaoth), God (Elohim) of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God (Elohim) over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Isaiah 37:16

In this passage Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, had moved down through Palestine conquering and burning each city as he went. Scorched earth was the brutal policy he pursued. As you may recall, the nations each had their own gods and totally identified with them. When Assyria's army triumphed, they attributed the victory to their god. They attributed the defeat of their enemy to the weakness and humiliation of their enemy's god.

Sennacherib sent a propaganda letter to frighten Hezekiah, the 12th king of Judah. In that letter, Sennacherib mocked Jehovah asking if Hezekiah thought that his God could protect him when the idols of every other city were conquered and burned. Sennacherib wanted Hezekiah to sue for terms of peace.

Hezekiah went immediately to the temple and in prayer consulted with God concerning what he should do. God sent Isaiah to tell Hezekiah that because he sought help from God rather than suing for peace or making protective treaties with powerful neighbors, God would defend Judah and destroy their idolatrous enemies.

Earlier, we quoted II Samuel 7:25, 26, where the author dealt with the name "The Lord Almighty God." If you look at the following verse, you will see that the author makes a very interesting change.

O Lord (Jehovah), Almighty (Sabaoth) God (Elohim) of Israel, you have revealed this to your servant saying, "I will build a house for you." II Samuel 7:27

This addition is a way to stress the fact that this God who is the eternal judge is also the one who is the merciful judge of Israel. This would be a shock to Israel's neighbors who worshipped idols. These carvings of wood and stone had no predisposition to help the people who worshipped them.

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In the tragic world of which we are a part, we often wonder why the righteous suffer at the hands of the wicked. This name, by which Hezekiah describes what God had revealed of His nature, reminds us that Jehovah, the eternal judge, will ultimately destroy the wicked who prey upon God's people. The name "Elohim" reminds us that the mercy of God will protect and bless those threatened with destruction by the wicked. This is important as Christians increasingly come under attack and persecution in our culture.

THE LIVING GOD, THE LORD ALMIGHTY, OUR GOD

God identified Himself by this combination of three names:

The Living God - "Elohim chayim" (אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים) - Elohim, as described in chapter one, focuses our attention on the mercy of God. The word "chayim" means to live, revive or quicken. There is a significant difference between the two names translated "the living God." "El chayim," in chapter 29, focuses on the great power of God to revive and give life. "Elohim chayim", as used here, focuses attention on the majesty and mercy of God which produces life.

The LORD - "Jehovah" - (יְהוָה) - this name focuses on the eternal nature of God. In turn, it stresses faithfulness. This name is often used in contexts stressing judgment.

Almighty - "sabaoth" - (צְבָאוֹת) - describes unbelievable, irresistible force. It is often used to identify an army which devastates and ruins.

Our God - "Elohim" - (אֱלֹהִים) - This name, as we said previously, identifies the majesty of God and is used in a host of instances where the context involves God's mercy.

Only Jeremiah uses this name. Notice the context in which it is presented.

"But you must not mention 'the oracle of the LORD (Jehovah)' again, because every man's own word becomes his oracle and so you distort the words of the living God (Elohim), the LORD (Jehovah) Almighty, our God (Elohim)." Jeremiah 23:36

Conditions among God's chosen people had severely declined. People had become so callous that they gave their own opinion and concluded that it was "the oracle of the LORD." They knew better. This was dishonest and blasphemous. They did it anyway because they thought it did not make any difference. Who would know? They thought that God did not pay attention to anything this trivial.

However, God did know. He paid close attention to their words. Through the prophet, God had told them not to say, "the oracle of the Lord," but they paid no attention to it. Now God spoke through the prophet again. Jeremiah said, on behalf of God, that by their claim to speak the oracle of the LORD, they distorted the words of "the living God, the LORD Almighty, our God."

Notice that two of these three names - "the living God" and "our God," involve the name "Elohim. This name places a strong emphasis on the mercy of God. The middle name - "LORD Almighty" - focuses upon devastating judgment.

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The message Jeremiah delivered was clear: You have done a tragic thing in your rebellion and disobedience. If you do not cease and repent, God will destroy with devastating force. He will forgive and restore when you turn to Him.

There are those who feel comfortable because they were never guilty of theft, adultery or murder. People might say, "they may have told a "fib" or two, but nothing serious." The problem is that in the sight of God there are no graded levels of sin. Sin is sin.

Jeremiah speaks to us as He spoke God's message to Judah of old. The LORD Almighty, the LORD whose judgment is devastating, waits in His mercy for us to change our ways. In His majesty and power He longs to show us the greatness of His mercy.

JEHOVAH

The Hebrew name for Jehovah is "yhwh" (יהוה), the unspeakable name. It is rendered "LORD" in several translations of the Bible, and means the Self-Existent, Eternal One. An excellent example of this meaning is found in Exodus, chapter three, where Moses was discussing his commission from God to return to Egypt. He was asking God what he was to say should the children of Israel challenge his authority to lead them out of their slavery. This was God's reply:

God said to Moses, "I am (Jehovah) who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" Exodus 3:14

God's revelation of Himself, in this verse, contains some important information. The Hebrew word for "I AM," is "hayah" (הָיָה) which is a shortened form of "Jehovah." It carries the connotation of not only being without beginning, but also of being always the same. God is now what He was before creation. He will be, when creation ceases, exactly what He was before it came into being. It is not just that He will always be, but that He will not change. "I AM" describes one who is absolutely reliable because He is changeless.

If you look at the thousands of uses of the name "Jehovah" in the Old Testament, you will notice that it is repeatedly used in situations where God is bringing judgment upon His people. We will speak of "judgment" and "justice" throughout this chapter. Our intent is to show that "judgment" is the carrying out, the expression of "justice."

The unspeakable Hebrew name for God, (יהוה), has no markings underneath. These markings are the vowels. When Jewish people come to the name "Jehovah" in their Torah reading, they usually substitute the name "Adonai" - sovereign, LORD, or "hashem" - simply meaning "the name," because God's name, yhwh, is considered too holy to be spoken by sinful human beings. The name was to be spoken on only one day of the year - The Day of Atonement - and then only in the Jerusalem temple and only by the High Priest.

Again, the name "Jehovah" was considered to be so holy that it could not be written with a pen which was used for common words. Before a scribe could write this name for God, he had to stop and prepare himself by washing and praying. He would then use a special pen which was reserved for the writing of this one name. No other name or letters were to be written with this pen.

The earliest recorded use of the name "Jehovah" was in Genesis 2:4, but only as a compound name along with the name "Elohim." The name "Jehovah," by itself, was first used by Eve. Notice what the text says:

Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD (Jehovah) I have brought forth a man." Genesis 4:1

Eve realized that "the eternal" was the one who enabled her to bear a son, and she was associating power with the name "Jehovah." This could be a reference to the whole miracle of birth. By the use of the single name "Jehovah" emphasis is placed on His eternal power.

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Jehovah is the most often used name to identify God in Scripture. In fact, it appears 5321 times in the Old Testament. In Strong's concordance, you will find over 22 pages, three columns to the page, of references to the name "Jehovah," either singly or in its compound forms. Because this is true, it is important to find out why it is used so often and what the Old Testament people learned about Jehovah. We must discover how their understanding of Jehovah caused them to use this name in compound forms.

It is not accidental that the name "Jehovah" appears as a compound name "Jehovah Elohim," "LORD God," or the eternal God of Mercy and Justice in the story of creation. However, when the author of Genesis comes to the rejection of Cain's offering, he turned immediately to the single name of "Jehovah." The stories of the Flood in Genesis 7, that of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, of the giving of each of the ten plagues in Exodus 9, and the destruction of Sodom in Genesis 3, all involve the exclusive use of the name "Jehovah." This is an important observation because it shows how the author used specific names for God which were pertinent to the topic under discussion in the context. When writing about experiences of mercy, the author used the name "Elohim" - the God of Mercy. When the author came to an experience where judgment was meted out, he characteristically used the name "Jehovah," the eternal God of Justice.

THE CHARACTER OF JEHOVAH

The writings of Biblical authors give us several insights into the character of God, a glimpse of who He, Jehovah, the God of Justice, really is.

Jehovah is Love

There are many facets to the love of God. We will attempt to deal with some of these in this study, in particular, His mercy, grace, goodness and generosity.

The Lord did not set his affection on you and chose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD (Jehovah) loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Deuteronomy 7:7, 8

God was moved only by His love to choose Israel to be His people. The divine motivation in His relationship with Israel was love. Love describes who God is.

Jehovah is Merciful

Because the name "Jehovah" is so often associated with judgment, we seldom think of Him as merciful at the same time. There are more references to Jehovah's mercy than there are to His judgment. This mercy is an expression of the love of God. The appropriate question then, is, "why is He called the God of Justice?" Look at the opening chapters of Genesis. The single name "Jehovah" is never used when the author described the creative process. When the author came to describe God's judgment for sin, however, there is an immediate shift away from the name "Elohim," the God of Mercy," to

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"Jehovah." This was also true when it came to the description of the flood and the tower of Babel.

There are many instances of Jehovah's mercy recorded in Scripture, but Exodus 17:4 is an excellent example. When Israel came to Rephidim, in the desert, there was no water. In characteristic fashion, the people blamed Moses so strongly for their plight, that he feared for his very life.

Then Moses cried out to the LORD (Jehovah), "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me." Exodus 17:4

In the verses which follow the above quote, Jehovah instructed Moses to go ahead of the people to Horeb. He was to take his staff with which he had struck the Nile, and strike a rock which God indicated. God promised that water would come out of the rock for their use, and it did. The fact is the Israelites did not deserve the kindness of Jehovah, but He met their need in spite of their conduct. This is mercy.

Jehovah shows great compassion. He loved Israel even though they sinned against Him repeatedly. In I Kings 10:9, the Queen of Sheba visited Solomon. He made the mistake of showing her all the wealth of Israel. Still she could see it was the Lord who had prospered Israel.

When Elijah faltered, Jehovah was patient with him, I Kings 19:11. He was the sustainer of his people, Psalm 3:5, and the refuge of the poor, Psalm 14:6. Jehovah preserves the simple, Psalm 116:6, and watches over His people as a shepherd watches over his sheep, Psalm 23:1. In all of His dealings with His people, Jehovah shows mercy and compassion to them all.

We must, however, be clear about the meaning of mercy. Jehovah is merciful to His people. This does not mean that He will overlook their sin and disobedience. He will punish, but even in His punishment He is merciful.

Jehovah is Gracious

People sometimes identify the word "grace" with graceful movement. It is much more than that. At root, the word "gracious" has to do with the offering of kindness, in excess of what may be expected by fairness and generosity, when judgment would be appropriate. We need to ask how the word "gracious" relates to qualities of "mercy" and "love." Both "mercy" and "grace" are expressions of "love." Mercy focuses attention on whether or not one deserves God's love. The word "gracious," however, focuses attention on the extent of this love. The word "gracious" is "chanan" (חָנַן) in the Hebrew. It means to bend, to be less than rigid, to stoop in kindness to an inferior which suggests a kindness that is not required, to show mercy or to have pity. Israel did not deserve the LORD'S goodness, but it was a gift to them just the same. So we can say that Jehovah, the God of Justice, who is timeless, who never ceases to exist, who is eternal and merciful, is also gracious.

Israel was anything but grateful for the goodness of God. Nevertheless, Jehovah was beneficent to them in spite of their actions and attitudes. This is what the Psalmist wrote about when he said,

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The LORD (Jehovah) is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. Psalm 145:8

The LORD (Jehovah) was gracious to Israel in every era. Despite the fact that Israel did not deserve the love of God, still they received it. That is grace.

In the 18th century, England had declined, morally, about as far as they could go. They deserved punishment. In His love, God showed great mercy, in His willingness to forgive people who really did not deserve it, and in His grace, by sending a great revival which resulted in large numbers turning to the LORD. The same thing happened in America in the 19th century.

Jehovah is Good

In both Old and New Testament times, pagan deities were thought to be devious, malicious and devastating. Jehovah was different. The Psalmists repeatedly focused on the goodness of Jehovah. David spoke beautifully of this when he said,

Good and upright is the LORD (Jehovah); therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. Psalm 25:8

The word "good" is "tov" (טוֹב) in the Hebrew. It means good in the widest sense. It is that which produces positive results, to be without negative side-effects. It is that which produces pleasure or good favor. The difference between "good" and "upright" is that upright has moral, ethical connotations. It is not as broad a term as "good." It is the opposite of devious and destructive.

David also spoke of this in Psalm 27:

I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD (Jehovah) in the land of the living. Psalm 27:13

In Psalm 92, the author, perhaps Moses, spoke in these words,

Proclaiming, "The LORD (Jehovah) is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him." Psalm 92:15

The word for "upright" is "yashar" (יָשָׁר) in the Hebrew. It literally means to be straight, to be right, to be appropriate, that which seems good. "Upright" is an expression of "good" with a major emphasis on moral quality.

When Shishak attacked Jerusalem, Jehovah sent the prophet Shemaiah to encourage the king and leaders of the people. When the prophet gave his encouraging promise, this was their response:

The leaders of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, "The LORD (Jehovah) is just." II Chronicles 12:6

A more precise translation for the word "just" would be "righteous." The word used here, "saddiq" (צַדִּיק), refers to a personal adherence to a moral or ethical standard. There is a strong contrast between Jehovah and the pagan idols. It would amaze pagan worshipers to think of Jehovah as adhering to a moral or ethical standard. Pagan deities were feared because they were capricious and were thought to resort to unethical deeds. Jehovah was upright and His word never changes.

Jehovah is Generous

The Scriptures identify an intense generosity which Jehovah shares with His people. You may remember that spies were sent into Canaan before Israel crossed the Jordan. Notice the report of the spies:

Taking with them some of the fruit of the land, they brought it down to us and reported, "It is a good land that the LORD (Jehovah) our God (Elohim) is giving to us." Deuteronomy 1:25

The spies brought back some of the fruit of the land to demonstrate just how bountiful it was. They saw the land and its fruitfulness as a gift from Jehovah. You see this same idea of generosity in the fact that Jehovah gave Solomon wisdom:

The LORD (Jehovah) gave Solomon wisdom, just as he had promised him. There were peaceful relations between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty. I Kings 5:12

Solomon had inherited an excellent kingdom and in the beginning of his reign, he asked God to give him wisdom. That fact, however, did not prepare him to rule wisely. God knew before He gave him the gift of wisdom that Solomon would fail as a "wise king." God gave it to him just the same and he was acclaimed for his wisdom by people of many nations. This was the generous gift of God to a king without experience.

Jehovah is Holy

When we say "God is holy" we may think of Him as unapproachable and unreachable. The word "holy," when applied to God, rather describes a life which is spiritually superior, pure and sinless, complete in a moral sense. When this quality is applied to people, it is a positive, godly quality of life that emphasizes goodness and opposes evil. It is to be increasingly free from sin, but does not suggest INSTANT sinlessness.

In Hannah's prayer, she described, in part, this quality in Jehovah.

There is no one holy like the LORD (Jehovah); there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God (Elohim). I Samuel 2:2

Hannah called to mind how Jehovah **remembered** her when others were abusive and unkind. Jehovah **understood** when even the priest did not understand. Hannah called this "holy," but she described it as a merciful act. Mercy is only one facet of what it means to be holy in that it expresses God's love in His dealings with wayward human beings.

Jehovah is Provident

Moses talked with Israel before they went into the Promised Land. He rehearsed for them how the LORD (Jehovah) brought them out of Egypt and now they were to go into the Promised Land. Filled with gratitude, Moses said:

And now I bring the first fruits of the soil that you, O LORD (Jehovah), have given me. Deuteronomy 26:10

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Moses was convinced that it was God who had given them both the land and the harvest as well. Jehovah was indeed a good provider.

Jehovah is All Knowing

In Psalm one, the author speaks of God in terms that would surprise idol worshippers in yet another way:

For the LORD (Jehovah) watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. Psalms 1:6

Idols carved from wood and stone were confined to a single location. Idol worshippers were not accustomed to think of their idols as knowing or caring about the details of their lives. The psalmist, probably David, points out that Jehovah is different. He "watches over" the way of the righteous. The word translated "watches over" literally means "to know." In other words, God knows His people so well He can distinguish the righteousness of their lives. God knows their intent, their motives, their patterns of thought; He knows everything about them. In the context of Genesis 3:5, the story of the fall from grace, the serpent deceived Eve telling her that God did not want her to eat of the tree lest she "be like God, knowing good and evil." God knows all things.

Jehovah is Dependable

Jeremiah gave a scathing prophecy, from God, about the Philistines, Moab and Ammon. In the midst of these prophecies, the prophet quoted Jehovah, as saying:

"I swear by myself," declares the LORD (Jehovah), "that Bozrah will become a ruin and an object of horror, of reproach and of cursing; and all its towns will be in ruins forever." Jeremiah 49:13

The people knew exactly what Jeremiah was talking about. If a person wished to help others understand that he meant what he said, he would swear an oath. If someone swore, he had to keep his word, no matter what. People would swear by something/someone which was considered to be very dependable. This presents a problem for God. No one was or is more dependable than God. Therefore, He swore by Himself. It was God's way of saying that there is absolutely no danger that He would go back on His word. He simply couldn't because He is **utterly** dependable.

In the book of Numbers, Moses spoke to Israel about this dependability.

When a man takes a vow to the LORD (Jehovah) or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said. Numbers 30:2

The important fact about a covenant or oath is that it can not be broken. Jehovah covenants with His people and He will not violate His agreement. Because God is so dependable, He expects dependability from His people.

JEHOVAH OUR JUDGE

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The Scriptures also portray Jehovah as our judge. This word, however, needs to be defined. The word "judge", "shephet" (שֹׁפֵט) in the Hebrew, literally means to exercise the process of government. In their situation, this involved what we think of today as the executive, legislative and judicial functions which are common in our own culture. For purposes of clarity, we will deal with the judicial function (judging), and the executive function (ruling) separately. We understand, however, that in their system of kings, these functions were combined. There was a second factor in their understanding. Judging also involved the governing by one person over the populace. In the Roman system of government, this idea of a ruler who governed and demanded justice, and who was the core of the system was called Caesar in their time. In the Old Testament, it is not coincidental that people like Gideon, Deborah and Samson were called "judges."

The Scriptures speak of Jehovah as "judge," and the author of Exodus gives us a clear understanding of Jehovah's judgment, and in definitive terms.

On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike every firstborn - both men and animals - and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD (Jehovah). Exodus 12:12

This statement to Moses identifies the fact that judging is a part of being Jehovah. Contrary to the understanding of some, judgment involves both the punishment of the guilty and the protection of the innocent. Again, "judging" and "punishing" are not exclusive synonyms. Judging and punishing are synonymous when God punishes the guilty. Judging and punishing are not synonymous when God judges by protecting the innocent and the helpless, as He does in this instance. That is part of what it means to be a judge. In the above verse, God emphasizes His nature by means of repetition - "I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord, the judge."

Some readers have misunderstood the message which Isaiah spoke:

For I, the LORD (Jehovah), love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity. Isaiah 61:8

When Jehovah says He "loves justice," we may think that He is eager to punish. That is not what Isaiah was saying when he quoted God. Loving justice means the provision of just conditions for all people and the establishment of harmonious relationships between them. Jehovah, however, does hate and condemn robbery, iniquity and every form of injustice. These He will punish.

There is a sense in which judging may seem to be synonymous with ruling, but in Isaiah 61:8, there is a difference in emphasis. The emphasis here is strongly on judging, not on ruling.

When David shared with Solomon what is involved in being king, he described the divine task of judging, the searching for motives and reasons for actions.

And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD (Jehovah) searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. I Chronicles 28:9

The word "searches", "darash" (דָּרַשׁ) in the Hebrew, means to search with great care and intensity. It is the basis on which judgment is formed.

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

We are sometimes distressed when we consider the judgment of God because we often think of "judgment" and "punishment" as synonyms and focus more on the extent of judgment rather than on the motive for it. The book of Judges is helpful in this regard. As recorded in that book, Jehovah punished Israel. Notice, however, that the punishment ceases immediately when the Israelites forsake their sinful ways and return to Jehovah. From this we learn that punishment is a means to draw us back to God. Judgment is more a commentary on human rebellion than on divine anger.

Jehovah is our judge. He will punish evil, but at the same time defend the innocent and the helpless. Both actions are involved in His judgment.

JEHOVAH IS KING

On one occasion, only Micaiah prophesied to the kings of Israel and Judah, urging them not to go into battle. He had been encouraged to speak favorably of the battle plan, as the other prophets had done, but he refused. With words bordering on sarcasm, He urged them not to go into battle, and in the process he pictured Jehovah as King. This is what he said,

Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD (Jehovah) sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. And the LORD (Jehovah) said, who will lure Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there? I Kings 22:19, 20

Micaiah saw Jehovah as the ruler over all the rulers of men. He prophesied that if Ahab did go to battle, he would die at Ramoth Gilead. However, Ahab did not listen! He went to battle and died there. Jehovah overruled the plans of earthly kings.

The Psalmist, probably David, acknowledged this fact when, in Psalm 10, he sang:

The LORD (Jehovah) is King forever and ever; the nations will perish from his land. Psalm 10:16

David did not exalt the royal status so much as Jehovah's power to control powerful rulers. This was the whole thrust of his song. It is also a glimpse of what God meant when He revealed Himself as "Jehovah."

Incidentally, we think of "Jehovah" as just another word or name for our God. It is that, but we know that it was used for more than that. In I Samuel 1:26, Hannah brought Samuel to the temple. She had promised that if she had a son he would be consecrated to the LORD as long as he lived. She brought him to the temple to fulfill that promise. In that experience, Hannah called Eli "LORD," using the word "Jehovah."

In I Samuel 24:8, David spared the life of Saul. When David left the cave, he called out to Saul and called him "LORD," using the Hebrew word "Jehovah."

Again, in I Samuel 25:25, Nabal behaved in an unfortunate manner toward king David. When David's men came, Nabal's wife, Abigail attempted to intercede on behalf of her husband. In so doing, she called David "LORD," or "Jehovah."

This gives us an insight into the meaning of the name "Jehovah." It was used to describe one who was in a position of power, one who had great authority at his disposal. This was especially true when it was used of our God in innumerable instances.

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

The author of I Chronicles records the prayer of David as he exulted over the willingness of the leaders to contribute toward the needs of the construction of the temple, and then continued by acknowledging Jehovah as the greatest king, the king over all:

Yours, O LORD, (Jehovah) is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. I Chronicles 29:11

David, Israel's greatest king, celebrates the kingship of Jehovah as He rules over His people. Though a descendant of David would sit on his earthly throne, **Jehovah** was the possessor of greatness, majesty, power and splendor - the accessories of the throne. This was an important understanding because the enemies of the Israelites tried to ridicule the God of Israel.

Isaiah had keen insight into the royal position of Jehovah when he prophesied:

The LORD (Jehovah) is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; it is he who will save us. Isaiah 33:22

Being a king is more than wearing royal robes and crowns. A king must dictate the laws by which his people will live, and must enforce those laws in the land. Jehovah is the King of all kings. He wears no royal robe, but He has given us the laws by which His subjects must live and He enforces these laws. He is our king.

There are many passages of Scripture which describe Jehovah as "king" or "ruler." As we suggested in the consideration of Jehovah as judge, "king" and "ruler" describe a person who maintains order in society in the enforcement of law and the protection of the people.

The function of "ruler" demands power to rule. Power is the enabling of kings.

In the Song of Moses, he illustrated a number of expressions of divine power and then said,

The LORD (Jehovah) will reign for ever and ever. Exodus 15:18

Jehovah exercised His rule over nations. He destroyed some nations - Deuteronomy 8:20, and peoples - Deuteronomy 9:26. Jehovah raised up Saul to rule over Israel - I Samuel 12:13. The Lord raised up Judges to deliver and restore His people in righteousness throughout the book of Judges. On the other hand, the LORD removed the kingdom from Saul and gave it to David - I Samuel 28:17.

Isaiah spoke of the "majesty" of Jehovah. He said, "they acclaim his majesty" - Isaiah 24:14. The word "majesty", "gaon" (גָּאון) in the Hebrew, comes from the root which means "to rise." It is the power to rise over something or someone. From this thought the Jewish people developed the idea of majesty.

It is not surprising that the Psalmists describe Jehovah in royal terms: "The LORD is king" - Psalm 10:16. David created a vivid image in our minds when he said, "Who is the king of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle" - Psalm 24:8.

The Scriptures also portray Jehovah as the ruler over nature: He dried up the waters - Joshua 5:1; He brought thunder and rain - I Samuel 12:18; He calls for famine in the land - II Kings 8:1.

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

One of the basic ingredients in an understanding of the Scriptural picture of Jehovah is that He is the king who rules over people and all creation; He has the power which resides in majesty over all powers.

David, in Psalm 55 gives us one of the most memorable pictures of Jehovah as our king.

Cast your cares on the LORD (Jehovah) and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall. Psalm 55:22

Along with the possession of great wealth and power, a king bore the burden of his people. If a ruler does not bear the burdens of his people, then he is not a king. David knew this from experience. This is the reason David pleaded with God on behalf of his people. He painted a vivid picture of Jehovah as the king who carries the burdens of his people just as a shepherd carries a wounded lamb.

It was apparently David, too, who wrote in Psalm 116 about the kindness of Jehovah:

The LORD (Jehovah) protects the simplehearted; when I was in great need, he saved me. Psalm 116:6

A king must be strong to repel the attacks of his enemies, but he must also be the protector of the helpless and innocent. This was not always present in the reign of kings. It was easy to take advantage of the defenseless. David affirmed that Jehovah was the king whose power was great, but whose compassion for the limited matched the greatness of His power.

Jehovah also brings judgment to bear upon kings and nations who do evil. Just before his death, Moses gave a farewell address to the people of Israel. He sang a song in which he spoke on behalf of Jehovah:

It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them. Deuteronomy 32:35

The word "vengeance," "naqam" (נָקַם) in the Hebrew, is usually used in situations where Jehovah is the source of the reprisal. This is especially obvious when Moses quotes Jehovah in Deuteronomy 32:

I will take vengeance on my adversaries, and repay those who hate me. Deuteronomy 32:41

This vengeance is very special in its nature. Jehovah can not be just if He does not judge evil. On the other hand, you will repeatedly see the mercy of Jehovah displayed along with His justice. This particular word "naqam", vengeance, stresses such a merciful vengeance. The purpose of divine vengeance is not to vent uncontrolled anger, but to draw the erring one back to Himself. It is a picture of Jehovah judging the people, but His purpose is love and not vindication.

JEHOVAH DEALS WITH HIS PEOPLE

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

The pagan idols were and are impersonal. They could never relate to the people who worshipped them and were not with them. These gods were so terribly limited: they could not move from one place to another by themselves; could not hear, could not see; could not talk; were without feelings and emotions, had no power to change anything and could do nothing for the people. Not so with Jehovah!

It was a triumphant moment in the experience of Israel in the desert. The tabernacle had been completed, but there was no evidence of Jehovah's presence there as yet. But then,

Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD (Jehovah) filled the tabernacle. Exodus 40:34

Jehovah had given evidence that He was now in the presence of His people.

In a different situation, Joseph was abused by almost everyone he encountered. When the author of Genesis described the diabolical scheme of Potiphar's wife, he also said,

*The LORD (Jehovah) was **with** Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. Genesis 39:2*

This accounts for the phenomenal experience of Joseph - every time someone took advantage of him, the result placed Joseph a little bit closer to the powerful position to which Jehovah was taking him. Jehovah was indeed with him.

When Joshua took over from Moses, the Israelites went into the land of Canaan, and the Ark of the Covenant was the symbol of Jehovah's presence with Israel.

So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD (Jehovah), and to all the elders of Israel. Deuteronomy 31:9

In contrast with the pagan idols, which were kept in temples, the symbol of Jehovah's presence was always with His people.

Jehovah Guided His People

Another phenomenon of the God (Jehovah) of the Israelites is that He could accompany, actually go with His people, something so totally foreign to idol worshippers.

One of the most shocking instructions God ever gave was received by Abram in his homeland, Ur of the Chaldees.

*The LORD (Jehovah) had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land **I will show you.**" Genesis 12:1*

Even though Abram didn't know where he was going, Jehovah guided the patriarch every step of the journey.

This was David's experience as he fought against the Philistines.

So David inquired of the LORD (Jehovah), and he answered, "Do not go straight up, but circle around behind them and attack them in front of the balsam trees. II Samuel 5:23

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Jehovah does not leave us to our own finite directions, but guides our leaders and leads His people, and Solomon confirmed this, when he said:

In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD (Jehovah) determines his steps. Proverbs 16:9

Jehovah determines the direction of His people. He does not relieve us of our responsibility, but He is our guide.

Jehovah Speaks To His People

This identifies a specific kind of personal relationship. In Exodus 6, the author reports Jehovah's message that Moses is to share with Israel.

Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD (Jehovah) and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them and will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. Exodus 6:6

You see the same thing at the end of Moses' life as recorded in Deuteronomy 32:48. One of the most awesome illustrations of Jehovah **speaking** to His people is the burning bush experience recorded in Exodus, chapter three.

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD (Jehovah) appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight - why the bush does not burn up." When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." Genesis 3:1-6a

Jehovah relates intimately with His people. This is what the author of Deuteronomy spoke about.

*Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, **whom the LORD (Jehovah) knew face to face**, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the LORD (Jehovah) sent him to do in Egypt. Deuteronomy 34:10*

Moses knew Jehovah "face to face." This is a way of saying that God is not aloof to His people. He is willing for His people to know Him intimately, suggesting a relationship of mutual love and respect.

When Hannah had suffered abuse because she was childless, the author of I Samuel reported that "the LORD remembered Hannah."

The Scriptures identify an intense generosity which Jehovah shares with His people. Spies were sent into Canaan before Israel crossed the Jordan. Notice the report of the spies:

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Taking with them some of the fruit of the land, they brought it down to us and reported, "It is a good land that the LORD (Jehovah) our God is giving to us." Deuteronomy 1:25.

The spies brought back some of the fruit of the land to demonstrate just how fruitful it was. They saw the land and its fruitfulness as a gift from Jehovah. You see this same idea of generosity in the fact that Jehovah gave Solomon wisdom, I Kings 5:12.

Jehovah is also the redeemer of His people. When Moses blessed the twelve tribes, he spoke of Jehovah as their savior, Deuteronomy 33:29. In II Samuel 12, Nathan challenges David because of his sin.

The LORD (Jehovah) sent Nathan to David. When he came to him he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor...." II Samuel 12:1

Jehovah sought out David even though he sinned grievously in many different ways. The book of Judges revolves around several situations where Jehovah sent a deliverer to people who because of their sin did not deserve it.

JEHOVAH IS A GOD WHO ACTS

Contrary to what some thought, Jehovah is a God of action. The response of some indicates that they see Jehovah as a passive deity. The Scriptural portrait of Jehovah differs with this understanding.

Moses understood this notion very well. In Exodus chapters seven through eleven, the author describes the ten plagues. In each instance, God told Pharaoh, through Moses, to let the people go. When Pharaoh refused, God sent another plague. The constant picture here was that of a God who acted upon His word.

Jehovah defends those who love Him. In II Samuel we read of the battles which killed four sons of the giants, relatives of Goliath and in his song of praise, David sang of Jehovah, his defender, in these words:

They confronted me in the day of my disaster, but the LORD (Jehovah) was my support. He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me. II Samuel 22:19, 20

In the book of Psalms we find many references to Jehovah being the defender of those in difficulties, even of the poor and fatherless (Ps. 82:3). Therefore, we can readily understand the Psalmist because he spoke from experience:

But the LORD (Jehovah) has become my fortress, and my God the rock in whom I take refuge. Psalm 94:22

The picture is vivid - Jehovah is my fortress; God is my refuge.

This is the message the angel gave to Gideon, in Judges 6:12, when he said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior." The same message is evident, in Deuteronomy, when Moses was turning the control over to Joshua. Moses gave commandments to the priests who carried the Ark of the covenant of the LORD. This was another of the many symbols of the fact that wherever Israel went, Jehovah was with them.

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

Some may think of God as looking for ways to punish His people, but the Old Testament picture of Jehovah is one who saves - Deuteronomy 33:29, and delivers - Psalm 6:4, His people.

Jehovah is also the sustainer of His people. This was David's experience as he encountered Jehovah's help when his son Absalom turned against him. David said,

I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD (Jehovah) sustains me. Psalm 3:5

Again in Psalm 14:6, David speaks of Jehovah as the refuge of the poor. Jehovah sustains His people when without Him, they would perish.

David again spoke of Jehovah as the healer of His people.

Be merciful to me, LORD (Jehovah), for I am faint; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are in agony. Psalm 6:2

When life was more than he could bear, David knew that Jehovah would heal him in spirit as well as in body.

Joshua knew that Jehovah was the protector of the faithful. Notice how the story unfolds.

Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the seacoast heard how the LORD (Jehovah) had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until we had crossed over, their hearts sank and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites. Joshua 5:1

Jehovah did what Israel could not do to defend themselves. This is what the Psalmist spoke of when he said that the LORD defended the righteous, Psalm 3:3.

The author of I Chronicles quoted David's song of thanksgiving where he said,

For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens. I Chronicles 16:26

In that endless list of contrasts between the idols of the pagan world and Jehovah, the God of Israel, is the fact that Jehovah is the creator.

If we take time to reflect on what God revealed of Himself when He called Himself "Jehovah," we stand in awe and reverence, we worship His unfathomable greatness, for there is none like Him.

JEHOVAH IS THE RECIPIENT OF WORSHIP

There are literally hundreds of passages in Scripture which portray Jehovah as the recipient of worship, which took on a number of different forms.

In Genesis 13:4, Abram built an altar to Jehovah. Worship is far more than the construction of a place of worship. It involves an understanding of Jehovah in terms of worthiness. Jehovah is so great that He alone deserves a special place set aside for the purpose of receiving worship and adoration.

In the Old Testament, worship involved the presentation of sacrifices. We must remember that a sacrifice involved an attitude, an understanding which lies behind the burning of the animal. A burnt offering involves the total consumption of an animal by

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fire, but it also involves an understanding that only Jehovah could take away sin. The sacrifice was an affirmation of this understanding.

The tithe and the offering at harvest were also an affirmation. God didn't need the tithes they brought to Him. He already owned everything. However, the tithes and offerings affirmed that people did not provide the food, Jehovah did.

Worship also involves thanksgiving and praise. David established the ordering of worship for Israel. He set apart Jeduthun and six of his sons, "who prophesied, using the harp in thanking and praising the Lord," I Chronicles 25:3. Thanks and praise are more than beautiful words set to moving music. Jeduthun and his sons were moved to use the words and music to describe and acclaim the greatness of Jehovah.

Sacrifices were brought to the altar for specific purposes. The burnt offerings were given to atone for the sins of the people. The fellowship offerings, or "peace offerings" as it is written in the Hebrew text, were given to focus attention on their communion or fellowship with God. In good times it took the form of a thank offering. In other times it took the form of a free-will offering. On all occasions it was an emphasis upon God's grace and goodness which they enjoyed in every circumstance of life. David was dealing with this when it says of him,

*David built an altar to the LORD (Jehovah) there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the LORD, and the LORD answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering.
I Chronicles 21:26*

Prayer was an intimate part of that fellowship which they shared with God. Prayer is more than a shopping list of what we want God to do or not to do. It is an intimate, sharing relationship between Jehovah and those who love Him.

Again, the worship of Jehovah includes our setting of ourselves apart for divine service (sanctifying one's self) and His reception of our gift of ourselves, for service. We have an example of this in Numbers, chapter six. Here, the author speaks on behalf of Jehovah identifying the situation of a Nazarite. The Mishna, the first part of the Talmud, which is the Jewish social and religious law, probably written about 200 A.D., indicates that the Nazirite commitment was usually for 30 days, but could be for any length of time or for life. The author of Numbers said,

Throughout the period of his separation to the LORD (Jehovah), he must not go near a dead body. Numbers 6:6

This was more than a ceremony, it was a personal relationship of devotion in which a person expresses his/her love for Jehovah by making him/herself an exclusive property of Jehovah. The person set him/herself apart for the service of Jehovah. The prohibition from touching a dead body has to do with becoming unclean. The Old Testament tells us that a person who touched a dead body would become unclean. If a person is set apart for divine service, they must remain clean all during that time of service no matter how long that might be.

Before Samuel was born, Hannah promised to give him back to the LORD. She kept that promise. When she brought Samuel to present him to the Lord at the temple, the author made this report:

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"So now I give him to the LORD (Jehovah). For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord (Jehovah)." And he worshipped the LORD (Jehovah) there. I Samuel 1:28

The word "worship" is "shachah" or (שָׁחָה) in the Hebrew language. It comes from a root which means to prostrate or to crouch, to make obeisance, to descend. It was also used in military contexts to describe how captives prostrated themselves and were walked upon by their captors to symbolize just how thoroughly they were slaves. In the story of the burning bush, there is a different symbol which is used to accomplish the same suggestion of servitude.

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD (Jehovah) appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight - why the bush does not burn up." When the LORD (Jehovah) saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." Exodus 3:1-6a

Moses responded in all the ways that a servant would respond to the call of his master. The situation demanded that of him. The author of Exodus described a royal throne room scene - "Do not come any closer," and "Take off your shoes." The removal of shoes is an affirmation of servanthood. The command that Moses maintain distance from God's presence was a common royal expectation.

In I Samuel 1:28, the young Samuel bowed himself before Jehovah, but it was more than a bending of the back. He was acknowledging his position as servant, a slave to his LORD. You see this outlook repeatedly in the life of Samuel.

In Deuteronomy, Moses gave instructions concerning the care of the priests.

The priests, who are Levites - indeed the whole tribe of Levi - are to have no allotment or inheritance with Israel. They shall live on the offerings made to the LORD (Jehovah) by fire, for that is their inheritance. Deuteronomy 18:1

The offerings were animals. It was a sacrifice to the LORD. The sacrifice was not intended to increase the possessions of Jehovah, for the people could not give Jehovah a sacrifice that was not already His. Moses deliberately announced that the sacrifice would provide food for the Levites.

Worship, in the Old Testament, is much more than the presentation of an animal in sacrifice. Worship is a relationship, an acknowledgment that Jehovah is the source of all we have. The blood sacrifice brings forgiveness which the people could not purge for themselves.

The author of I Chronicles gives us another excellent insight into the worship of Jehovah. Describing the duties of the Levites, he said,

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They were also to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD (Jehovah). They were to do the same in the evening and whenever burnt offerings were presented to the LORD (Jehovah) on Sabbaths and at New Moon festivals and at appointed feasts. They were to serve before the LORD (Jehovah) regularly in the proper number and in the way prescribed for them. I Chronicles 23:31

This passage identifies some of the ingredients of worship:

- Give thanks and praise
- Present offerings to the LORD
- Serve before the LORD (This is a royal picture. Worshipers serve **before** God in the same way servants serve in the presence of a king.)

The worship of Jehovah is more than pews and pulpits. It is our response to Jehovah for who He is and what He does in our daily lives.

The author of I Chronicles highlights another ingredient in the worship of Jehovah.

*David built an altar to the LORD (Jehovah) there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. **He called on the LORD, (Jehovah) and the LORD (Jehovah) answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering. I Chronicles 21:26***

The worship of Jehovah involves a prayer relationship. To David, prayer was a meaningful communication where both he and Jehovah shared with each other. The emphasis in this act of worship is on sharing, rather than on requesting.

Again, however, we are faced with the issue of reality. If we really believe that God is Jehovah, then what is there about our conduct and motives which gives conclusive evidence that we act on the basis of what we believe?

JEHOVAH JIREH

*So Abraham called the place "The LORD will provide" (Jehovah Jireh).
And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be
provided." Genesis 22:14*

This is perhaps the only place in the Old Testament where the name of "Jehovah" - (יהוה) "Jireh" - (יהיִרֶה) is found. "Jireh" comes from the Hebrew root word "ra-ah" (ראָה) which means vulture. It is named in this manner because of the unusually sharp vision a particular kind of vulture in that part of the world possessed. This keen vision enabled the bird to observe everything and to spot the provision of food from a great distance. A formal definition of Jireh is "Jehovah who sees like a vulture, the one who is aware of every need and provides abundantly."

In Genesis we read that Abraham became aware of this quality of God's character through an experience that tested his faith to the utmost. Abraham and Sarah had been married for decades, but had no children. This was a great sorrow to them, but it was much more than that. In those days, if a couple had no children, it was thought that God was punishing them for some hidden sin. This outlook resulted in ostracism. The wife would not be welcomed at the city well to talk with the other wives. The husband would not be welcomed to sit in the city gate and discuss the affairs of state and finance. People would avoid business contacts with him and he would thus have a difficult time earning a living. This went on for decades for Abraham and Sarah. Long before though, God had promised to give them a son, but no son had been born as yet. Finally, when they pleaded for a child, and the promise seemed to stay unfulfilled, Abram and Sarai took matters into their own hands.

There was an understanding, in that culture, that if a man and wife had been married and childless for a period of ten years, one of three things should happen:

- The wife should bear a child.
- The wife should give her servant girl to her husband to have a baby on the wife's behalf.
- The husband should divorce his wife.

It was not idle or casual information that is given by the author of Genesis when he states,

*So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her
Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife.
He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. Genesis 16:3, 4*

This direction provided a child, but it also created great strife in the home. Things got so bad that Hagar was ultimately sent away to die in the desert. This was not what God had in mind for His people. God did not need help from Abram and Sarai. In His good time, God did provide a son, Isaac. When he grew to the age of 12, he was considered to be a man. Some time after that, to Abram's shock and dismay, God commanded him to go to Mt. Moriah and make a burnt offering of his son. It meant a sacrifice of total surrender, his only son, his only child. This must have been a great struggle in Abram's life. Who would care for them in their old age, and what of the promise of having descendants like the stars in the sky? Nevertheless, Abram agreed to obey the unbelievable command of God.

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As Abram and Isaac prepared to leave to make the sacrifice, Isaac asked his father a rather confrontive question. He pointed out that they had the wood and the fire, but where was the sacrifice? Abram simply answered, "God will provide."

When they reached the mountain, Abram and Isaac built the altar and prepared the wood. Then he tied up his son and placed him upon the altar. Think for a moment - what strength of faith and trust in God it took to do this! The beleaguered Abram drew his knife and would have slain his son except that God intervened. God did not want Abram to kill Isaac. He wanted Abram's total commitment which included his son.

At that moment, Abram spotted a ram caught by his horns in a thicket, and he made a burnt offering of the ram, the sacrifice supplied by God in the hour of Abram's greatest need.

When the sacrifice was completed, Abram gave the place a name because this place held such deep meaning for him. He called the place of sacrifice "Jehovah Jireh," Jehovah the God of Justice, who sees the need as sharply as a vulture sees his prey on a distant landscape. Abram learned that God will provide.

Into each life come the seemingly insurmountables, those problems which seem to defy solutions, difficulties that seem destined to destroy us. God will provide in the midst of our struggles which we can not understand. His name is "Jehovah Jireh," the LORD will provide.

JEHOVAH TSIDKENU

"The days are coming," declares the LORD (Jehovah), "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a king who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called : The LORD Our Righteousness. " Jeremiah 23:5, 6

The Hebrew word for "Righteousness" is "tsedek" or "צֶדֶק". It means to be morally or legally right, to have equity, to be prosperous, to be altogether just, to cleanse, to clear oneself, lawful, a righteous man. It means beneficence, rectitude, a moral virtue. The name in Jeremiah 23:6 is "יהוה צֶדֶק־נֹר", literally "Jehovah our righteousness."

In this section of the prophecy, Jeremiah made a pronouncement against evil kings, destroying shepherds and lying prophets. In the midst of these denunciations, Jeremiah prophesies concerning the coming of Messiah, and this name, Jehovah our Righteousness, is specifically applied to the Messiah.

The word "righteous" is repeatedly used of God in connection with His judgment.

*He will judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice.
Psalm 72:2*

The prophet Micah spoke of this righteousness when he said,

*My people, remember what Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD (Jehovah).
Micah 6:5*

These words were powerful. Micah gave two illustrations for what he was trying to tell the people. First, Balak tried to get Balaam to curse Israel. God told Balaam not to do it. He chose the counsel of God rather than the request of Balak, and God blessed Israel. Secondly, Micah mentions the journey from Shittim to Gilgal. Shittim was the last place where Israel had camped before crossing into the Promised Land. Gilgal was the first place where they had camped inside that land. In effect, Micah was saying that God had brought them out of the land of Egypt and had sustained them on the trip to the Land of Promise. God had protected them from those who wished them harm and had finally brought them into the land which He had promised their forefathers. Only then did Micah say, the acts of God are indeed righteous.

In Daniel's petition to God for deliverance, he prayed,

The LORD (Jehovah) did not hesitate to bring disaster upon us, for the Lord (Jehovah) our God (Elohim) is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him. Daniel 9:14

Daniel affirmed that God is always righteous in all His deeds. God carries out judgment exactly as He promised He would, but He shows mercy in His justice because He is righteous.

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes from Psalm 45 when he said,

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Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. Hebrews 1:8

The author is saying that righteousness is a quality of life which is the foundation characteristic upon which the kingdom of Jesus Christ is based. It is the governing principle by which He rules.

It is not hard to understand why Jesus, in His prayer for the disciples, said these words:

Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. John 17:25

Jesus described His Father as the Righteous One. He could have called the Father "patient." He chose, however, to see Righteousness as the name upon which He wished to focus.

It is fitting that John should speak of Jesus, our intercessor, in these words:

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. I John 2:1

There is a strong contrast in this picture of God. The pagan deities, worshipped in Old and New Testament times, were anything but righteous. These deities were capricious - they were thought to play dirty tricks on their followers. The act of sacrifice which people thought would please them on one occasion was thought to anger them on another. These deities were considered changeable; they were thought to be fickle; they were thought to take delight in the pain and destruction of their followers.

Jehovah was different. He was righteous. He always judged in righteousness and was merciful even when His people were disobedient.

It is with great comfort and joy that we are reminded by Jeremiah,

This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord (Jehovah) Our Righteousness (tsidkenu). Jeremiah 23:6b

This name, translated righteousness or righteous one, is also used to describe the conduct of certain people.

Abraham believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness (tsidakah.) Genesis 15:6

Abraham's conduct was such that God described it as righteousness, and Paul confirms this statement in Romans 4:3.

The qualities of life, both good and bad, are identified by the company they keep. Paul speaks of this truth in many places, but particularly in Romans and I Timothy.

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. Romans 14:17, 18

Paul was dealing with a delicate problem. Christians, then and now, differ about what is right conduct in their own cultures. Some Roman Christians believed one could eat meat,

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others disagreed because the meat had probably been offered as a pagan sacrifice before it was sold. Paul urged them to be guided by loving concern and not by cold logic. Then Paul described the kingdom in negative and positive terms:

- It is not a matter of eating and drinking.
- The kingdom is a matter of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

I Timothy, chapter 6, also speaks to this issue:

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. I Timothy 6:11

Righteousness blends with godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness to shape a maturing Christian life. Paul had described a lifestyle unworthy of a follower of Jesus Christ. Prior to verse 11, Paul pointed out the folly of a life of envy, quarreling, malicious talk, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of corrupt minds. Evil men thought of godliness as a means to financial gain. Paul said that when we flee these things, we must also pursue righteousness if we would be people of God.

Solomon describes a king in Psalm 72:

Endow the king with your justice, O God (Elohim), the royal son with your righteousness. He will judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice. The mountains will bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness. Psalm 72:1-3

This is probably a prophecy of the coming Messiah, though it is framed in a message about the king. Whatever the case may be, Solomon used the same word found in the name for God we are considering here.

Righteousness is an overarching characteristic of a life lived in obedience to God. There are qualities, however, which help to define this characteristic. It appears that it was David who said of the man "who fears the LORD,"

... his righteousness endures forever. Psalm 112:3

Righteousness is an enduring quality. It does not change. It is always essential to human well-being. This righteousness is an obedient lifestyle that contributes to the formation of peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Micah's prophecy deals with a positive and negative description of righteousness. This is the way he phrased it:

With what shall I come before the LORD (Jehovah) and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:6-8

The Negative

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Righteousness is not identified with multiple sacrifices, and it is not the sacrificing of one's "firstborn" to God as the pagans were required to do for their god Baal.

The Positive

Righteousness is obeying what God requires of us. It is to be just in all one's actions, and involves being in love with extending mercy to those in need. Righteousness involves a humble walk with God.

Paul, in II Corinthians 5, describes the means, the source of righteousness.

*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might **become** the righteousness of God. II Corinthians 5:21*

Notice that Paul did not say they should **have** righteousness, but that "in him we might **become** the righteousness of God." His righteousness is something that we become, not something which we eventually attain. It is a **gift** we receive that causes us to be the righteousness of God. This gift comes to us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

In the quotation, with which we began this portion, notice that Jeremiah prophesied that God would raise up a king in David's line. There was no "righteous branch" among the kings who followed David. Jeremiah said that this king would be called "the LORD our Righteousness." There was one who fit that description and who one day will be our king, even our Messiah, Jesus Christ.

JEHOVAH NISSI

*Moses built an altar and called it The LORD (Jehovah) is my Banner. He said, "For hands were lifted up to the throne of the LORD. The LORD will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation."
Exodus 17:15, 16*

The phrase, "The LORD is my Banner" comes from the Hebrew words "Jehovah Nissi" (יְהוָה נִסִּי). It appears that this is the only place in the Bible where this particular name is found. The word "Nissi" was a military term which meant flag staff, a sign or a standard. The banner was used to give instant instructions to the troops in the heat of battle. The word was also used to speak of raising a beacon.

In Exodus, chapter 17, Moses and the people of Israel went from the Wilderness of Sin toward Rephidim. When they reached Rephidim, they discovered that there was no water. This was a tragic situation for such a large company of people in such a barren area where there was little hope of finding an alternative source of moisture.

The people began to do what they had done ever since they left Egypt - they complained bitterly. They had complained before, but nothing like this. The situation became so bad that Moses was concerned for his life.

The people went beyond complaint to abuse. They made bitter accusations against Moses.

"Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and our livestock die of thirst?" Exodus 17:3

The people of Israel knew better, but they were frustrated because they had to face a form of danger they had not had to deal with in some time. Whether they knew about it or even cared, the people were dealing with God and not with Moses, for it was God who had brought them to Rephidim, and not Moses.

The situation was extreme. Moses cried to the LORD in the belief that his very life was in danger. God did not disagree with Moses' summation of the situation, but He did instruct him concerning the direction in which to move with these angry people. He was to take the Elders and go on ahead of the people. The reason for this is not clear, but it appears that it was a way of allowing the people to see what He was about to do. Therefore, Moses took the Elders and went on ahead. He was to take the very same rod which he had held out over the Red Sea and now strike a rock in the wilderness. Moses obeyed and water came forth.

The names Moses used give us an impression of just how upset he was with the people of Israel:

- Massah - testing
- Meribah - bitterness

In the midst of their quarreling with Moses, the people asked an angry question about God. "Is the LORD with us or not?" We should never come to God with demands that He make His intentions clear. We must come to Him trusting that He will bless us in spite of our frequent disobedience. That was not a place in grace that Israel had discovered as yet. They were into anger and demands.

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God's response to their unfortunate demand tells us something important about His character. The people of Israel were behaving in a manner that was totally disobedient to the covenant they had made with God. Their conduct deserved punishment, not provisions. God did not lash back at them. At the very time they were venting their bitterness, God took Moses and the Elders to a place to give water to Israel. Throughout history, this has been the way God dealt with His people. Repeatedly God blessed people at the same time they were disobeying or venting their anger against Him.

You may recall the incident in which the Amalekites came to do battle with Israel, and the children of Israel were at a distinct disadvantage to fight them. These children of Amalek were well armed soldiers. The Israelites were poorly armed and were not soldiers at all, but they acted as though they could take care of themselves. However, it would be seen just how well they could do that.

Moses responded like a leader would. He instructed Joshua, the leader of his poorly equipped and untrained army, to select men who were to go out to do battle with the army of Amalek. Meanwhile, Moses knew the direction of survival. He took Aaron and Hur with him and went to the hilltop to pray. Why would he take two men with him? Moses knew that God would listen to one just as quickly as three. Moses also knew that truth was established in the presence of two or three witnesses and not by just one. It was for this reason that three men went up to the hilltop.

It was common for a king to go to a high place where he could see and give direction to the course of battle. The kings' instructions and encouragement were conveyed to the troops by means of the ensign, who was always at the ready.

For Moses it was different for when he arrived at the top of the hill, in full view of both Israel and the children of Amalek, Moses lifted up his hands in prayer. Notice that God did not instantly answer the prayer and do away with the Amalekites. As long as Moses held up his hands, a symbol of prayer, the army of Israel was winning. When Moses grew tired, his hands began to come down, and it was clear that as the hands came down, the army of Israel was losing.

To keep Moses' arms in the air, Aaron and Hur placed a stone for Moses to sit upon and they each held up one arm, and the tide of the battle turned, and Israel won. In this manner God showed that He was the one who rescued Israel, and not the army.

The question of Israel was harsh and demanding, "Is God with us or not?" This confrontation would have been enough for God to reconsider His willingness to be their help. Rather than saying that He was present, God simply gave the army of Israel an impossible victory to display His allegiance. Obviously, Joshua and his soldiers won the day by the hand of God.

But God was not done with Israel. He instructed Moses to write this down. Joshua had been involved in the heat of the battle and might not remember all the details.

Then God made a promise to Moses, a promise that would even benefit these undeserving Israelites. God promised that He would erase the Amalekites from the face of the earth. One must admit that the Amalekites were receiving their just desserts, but Israel was in no position to say too much about obedience and love for God. God made the promise and kept it. This is important because it focuses on the meaning of "the LORD is our Banner." God was their rallying place, not because they were so deserving, but because of His great love.

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Moses came down from the hill top and built an altar. The building of an altar was a way of announcing that it was God who had come to their defense, and it was Moses' awareness of the course of events of that day.

Moses called this altar Jehovah Nissi - Jehovah is my Banner. He knew that God was the one, even in His patient endurance of the affront of the outlandish Israelites, who gave Israel the guidance and encouragement they needed to win. Moses was announcing that it was the power of God and not the leadership of Moses and Joshua that won the day for Israel.

In this entire experience, we see a picture of who God really is and how He changed a bitter tragedy to beautiful deliverance. The mercy and long-suffering of God were evident even in the face of an ungrateful, forgetful people of Israel. God did not **react** in kind to the ingratitude of Israel. God **acted** in kindness to deliver the undeserving.

Notice also that God did not protect Israel from the hardship of dangerous experiences. Rather, God delivered them in the midst of the troubles of life. We can talk of God's power, but it is only in the presence of very threatening circumstances that we can experience first hand the greatness of the power of God. It is in the heat of battle that we learn that we can really trust the power and promise of God. Moses knew it was true and affirmed the truth by calling the altar - Jehovah Nissi.

JEHOVAH SHALOM

So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it "The LORD is peace." To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. Judges 6:24

In the Hebrew, the name which Gideon had given this altar is Jehovah (יהוה) shalom (שְׁלוֹמִי), "The Lord is peace."

God had given Israel the land of Canaan. God had also given them the commandment to drive the former inhabitants out of the land. Israel, however, had refused to do as God commanded. Therefore, He now gave them exactly what they wanted: He allowed the former inhabitants to stay in the land. However, these former inhabitants became a thorn in the side of Israel. It is amazing how often judgment is simply allowing us to have what we want, but which is not in our best interest.

As you study the book of Judges, you will notice that there is a cycle which is repeated again and again throughout the book. The cycle looks like this:

- The people did evil in the sight of the Lord.
- Their evil ways caused them to suffer. The suffering increased and got worse and worse.
- When the suffering became unbearable, Israel cried out to the Lord.
- God heard that prayer.
- The people repented of their sins.
- God, having heard their cry, sent a judge to deliver them.
- When God delivered Israel, the people began to feel that they had done it on their own.
- The people again drifted into sin.
- The cycle started all over.

In the time of Gideon, when the Midianites were oppressing Israel, he was hiding in the threshing floor trying to prepare just a little grain for the family to eat. The Midianites had confiscated the food supplies. The thing that Gideon was doing was dangerous and could have cost him his life. In the midst of this awkward situation, God spoke to him.

God called Gideon a "mighty man of valor." I am certain that Gideon felt like most anything except a mighty man of valor. Many people may consider him a coward because he was hiding to prepare a little food for his family. However, that was not cowardice, although it might have seemed so in his own eyes. No doubt, to him a "mighty man of valor" would not hide, but would come out into the open and do what was necessary despite the consequences.

Gideon's real fear became apparent because he had seen the Lord and felt that anyone who did would die. After being reassured that God would be with him, Gideon built an altar to Jehovah, and called that altar "Jehovah Shalom," the God of Peace. To Gideon, however, peace was more than the absence of war, it was a quality of life. It was more a relationship to God, than a political situation.

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Notice that Gideon called the altar "**Jehovah** Shalom." He did not use the name Elohim. As we have pointed out in previous chapters, the name Jehovah is often employed when one is referring to divine judgment, while Elohim is used in situations where the Scriptures speak of the mercy of God. Gideon was convinced that Jehovah, the God of justice, was in control and it gave him that peace that only God can give, and which, one day, would be felt and experienced by all of Israel.

Today, in the struggles of life, we want peace to just happen. We forget that peace is the product of the presence and action of the God of Justice. Peace is not a goal to be achieved, but a by-product of God's presence. We must remember that Jehovah is shalom, Jehovah is the God of Peace, and can be just that in our lives as well.

JEHOVAH SHAMMAH

"Jehovah Shammah," (יְהוָה שָׁמָּה) in the Hebrew, literally means Jehovah is there. When the construction of the tabernacle was completed, the visible presence of God came in a cloud and abode between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies. When the children of Israel traveled through the desert, the pillar of cloud and fire were visible reminders that God was there; that God was with them; that God was leading them.

Israel, however, was not always faithful to that commitment and the Shekinah glory, the visible presence of God, finally left the tabernacle. It was a visible reminder to Israel that they could not count on God to lead and defend them for they had broken the covenant with Him. Israel lived with this tragic situation for a long time.

For Ezekiel to say that Jehovah was present in this new temple would be a great shock to Jewish people. Israel knew that they did not deserve the presence of God and had experienced that dark loneliness for a long time.

Ezekiel surprised the Israelites again. He told them that the name of Jerusalem would be changed. Though this prophecy took place hundreds of years before Christ, the city had already been called "Jerusalem" for at least as long before that. Now Ezekiel tells them that the name would be changed. This is the way Ezekiel closed his prophecy:

*The distance all around will be 18,000 cubits. "And the name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD (Jehovah Shammah) IS THERE."
Ezekiel 48:16*

The people had to have mixed feelings about that announcement. It is a little bit like changing the national anthem or changing the name of our country. There is a certain personal attachment to that name that has deep meaning for the individual and the country. Add to this the fact that the people had been led to believe that Jerusalem would never cease to be because that was the place where God would reveal Himself to his chosen people throughout the centuries.

The new name of the city was to be "Jehovah Shammah," "God is there!" This was more than a new name. When there are differences between people, they do not go out of their way to share each other's presence. The Jewish people knew that if you were with a person, it meant that there was harmony between the two of you. To Israel, it was a promise that in the midst of their separation from God, He would, nevertheless, hold out the invitation to be in harmony with Him again. God would be merciful and forgiving in the midst of their waywardness.

All of us have known times in our lives when there was distance between ourselves and God. God did not move away from us, we did! In those painful experiences, we need to remember that just as in the midst of Israel's rebellion, while they were still alienated from God, He declared His name to be "Jehovah Shammah" "God is there." He will be there for us. He is still reaching out to us to reestablish a harmonious relationship with Him. The awareness that God loves us, that God patiently waits for a new relationship with us, will bring strength to face the hardships we have created for ourselves.

THE LORD GOD

"The LORD God," is a compound name, and is made up of two separate names for God, Jehovah and Elohim.

- **LORD** - "Jehovah" or (יהוה) in the Hebrew - The definition of this name was dealt with in chapter six. Suffice it to say that "LORD" or "Jehovah" focuses on the eternal nature of God. It is often employed when dealing with situations involving judgment.
- **God** - "Elohim" or (אלהים) in the Hebrew - This name identifies the supreme God, and is used in the plural. It does not describe the existence of multiple gods, but is used as the plural of reverence or respect. The constant use of the plural form, even in singular contexts, supports the emphasis on God's awesome majesty. This name is also used to stress the mercy of God, and sometimes "Elohim" is used when speaking of kings and masters of slaves. Chapter one gives more information.

These two names form two different combinations in the Old testament. The most prominent combination is "LORD God" or "Jehovah Elohim." When used in this manner, the author places an emphasis on the quality of self-existence or he may be dealing with a situation of judgment.

There are a few times when the author used the reverse combination. "God the LORD" or "Elohim Jehovah" emphasizes the supremacy of God or focuses attention on the expression of God's mercy.

It is unfortunate that some translations of the Bible translate "El Jehovah" as "God the LORD" and then translate "Elohim Jehovah" as "God the LORD" also. This is not as precise as it needs to be.

When combined as "LORD God," the authors are attempting to speak of God in a way that highlights four divine characteristics:

- God is eternal
- God is our judge
- God is majestic
- God is merciful

In this combined form of "LORD God," the stress, however, is upon God as the eternal judge. A lesser emphasis is placed upon His majesty and mercy, although they are not excluded.

In Genesis alone, nineteen of the twenty uses of this combined name deal with creation and the Fall. That is not surprising, given the meaning of the names. The opening chapters of Genesis explode with action: God made the earth, He planted a garden, commanded the man, formed every beast, formed the woman, called to Adam, confronted the man, the woman and the serpent. The process of equipping the creation is ascribed to the "LORD God," the Eternal Judge and God of Mercy. In each of these actions, the author speaks of God as the "Lord God," "Jehovah Elohim," the eternal, self-existent sovereign.

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

The author of Genesis uses the names of God very carefully. In Genesis 1:1-2:3 the name "God" or "Elohim" is used exclusively. It focuses on the act of creation as an act of mercy and majesty. From 2:4-3:24, however, the author used the name "Jehovah Elohim." Beginning with Genesis 4:1, the story of Cain and Abel, the author begins to use the name "Jehovah." In the middle of Genesis 2:4-3:24, the part which used the name "Jehovah Elohim," there is the story of the encounter between the serpent and the man and woman. When the serpent spoke to Eve about God, he used the name "Elohim," the God of mercy. Notice how he spoke,

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God (Jehovah Elohim) had made. He said to the woman, "Did God (Elohim, the God of Mercy) really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" Genesis 3:1

In effect, the serpent was asking a leading question, "Could the God of Mercy really deny you the right to eat from any tree in the garden?" The unspoken suggestion in this statement is that a merciful God wouldn't do such a thing.

In a situation brimming with judgment, Moses spoke openly with Pharaoh.

But I know that you and your officials still do not fear the LORD God (Jehovah Elohim). Exodus 9:30

The strength of Moses' statement is in the way he identifies God. He spoke of God as "Jehovah Elohim," the self-existent, supreme sovereign. Moses used the strongest description to identify God and in deft sarcasm said, "you still do not fear him."

The name of the Lord God takes a different turn in I Samuel. There, in chapter 2:3, Hannah speaks of God in her prayer as "The LORD is a God who knows." Hannah denounced those who were arrogant, and talked openly about her barrenness. She portrays God as a knowing judge.

In I Samuel 6:20, the Philistines had captured the Ark, and it had caused much sickness and death among them. They wanted Israel to come and take it back. The people of the town where the Ark resided said,

Who can stand in the presence of the LORD (Jehovah), this holy God (Elohim)? To whom will the ark go up from here? I Samuel 6:20

In I Samuel, the name "the LORD God" describes unimaginable power and knowing judgment. This relates directly to the two names which make up this name for God.

However, in the book of Joshua, each use of this name dealt with one or more facets of the worship of God.

7:20 Achan confessed his sin to the "LORD God."

8:30 Joshua built an altar to "the LORD God."

9:18, 19 Using this name, Israel took an unchangeable oath, and kept it, when deceived by her neighbors.

22:34 "The LORD is God" was the name of the altar Reuben built.

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

24:23 Joshua, in his farewell address, urged people to throw away their idols and worship the Lord God.

Sometimes we take the names of God too casually. The Biblical writers did not. The God of Israel is LORD: He is the eternal sovereign of our lives; He is the judge who watches over our lives: The Lord is God, He is Jehovah Elohim. Even in the midst of His sovereign power, He extends unlimited mercy when we do not deserve it. In view of who the Lord God is and what He constantly does, we need to carefully look at our own conduct and attitudes.

Have you ever experienced a situation where the justice of God would have been the expected action, but He instead extended mercy? Did it drive, compel you to worship the LORD God?

GOD THE LORD

In the Old Testament of the New International Version of the Bible, the Hebrew form "El Jehovah" is translated "God the Lord."

God - "El" - (אֱלֹהִים) - The Hebrew word "El" is translated "God" and means strength, might, almighty, mighty one. We should be reminded that the name "El" is **not** an abbreviation of the name "Elohim," though they are often translated by the same word.

LORD - "Jehovah" - (יהוה) - is the Jewish national name for God. It focuses upon God as self-existent and eternal. To the Hebrew, it is the most awesome name and can not be uttered by anyone except the High Priest; only in the temple; only on the Day of Atonement. Scribes have to write the name with a special pen reserved for that purpose. This name is often used when dealing with situations involving divine judgment.

The meaning of these two names, together, involve four different understandings about God:

- God is the Mighty One. (El)
- God is Self-existent. (Jehovah)
- God is eternal. (Jehovah)
- God is the judge. (Jehovah)

In this instance, the major focus is on God, the Mighty One, and the Biblical authors, who use this name for God, place a lesser focus on God the self-existent, eternal judge.

The Sons of Korah, in Psalm 85, spoke in these terms,

I will listen to what God the LORD (El Jehovah) will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints - but let them not return to folly. Psalm 85:8

The Psalmist used the name "God the LORD," which stresses God the Almighty, when focusing attention on God's promise of peace and the relationship of God, the Mighty-One, with His people.

Isaiah wisely chose this name for God when announcing a message from Him about His great power.

This is what God the LORD (El Jehovah) says- "He who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it..." Isaiah 42:5

God, through Isaiah, was describing His omnipotent power of creation and the unique things He did to make it the marvel that it is.

There are times in every life when it seems that all one can see are difficulty and trouble. We face experiences in which we can see no possible way of escape. In the midst of these troubles and difficulties, we need to remember that "God the LORD" created us

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and He never changes. The one who created us, the one who gave us breath, is as omnipotent today as when from nothing He formed a universe and in it placed two very special people - Adam and Eve.

THE LORD WHO HEALS YOU

*Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. There the LORD made a decree and a law for them, and there he tested them. He said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians. For **I am the LORD (Jehovah) who heals you.**" Exodus 15:25, 26*

God had brought Israel out of Egypt in the Exodus. He had brought them safely through the Red Sea and now into the desert. A great concern for any people in the desert is finding a supply of good water. The Israelites had searched, but had found nothing. Eventually they came to Marah. Here they found water, but it was bitter. To them it was worse than not finding any at all.

As happened so often, when the people of Israel came to a difficult time in their lives, they were consumed with their current problem. They forgot what God had done for them in the past. If they had just taken a moment to think, they would have realized that if God could deliver them from the powerful hand of pharaoh, He certainly could also provide water for them in the desert.

But the people began to grumble. They accosted Moses and treated him as though it was his fault that the water was bitter. They attacked him, saying, "What are we to drink?" If you look carefully, there is an important insight concerning Israel's grumbling. When Israel complained, God met their need, but it was always clear that He was most displeased with their attitude.

God showed Moses a piece of wood and instructed him to throw it into the bitter water. Moses obeyed and the water became sweet and drinkable. It was because of this experience and to remember what God had done for them that they called the place "Marah" which is the Hebrew word for "bitter."

God then made a covenant with Israel. He promised that if they would keep all His laws and decrees, He would protect them from all the diseases that had come upon the Egyptians. God then said, "I am the Lord that heals you," "Jehovah Rophaeka," (רֹפֵאֵי יְהוָה). The term "healer" can be found in most every Hebrew dialect, even in those which are Afro-semitic. In almost every instance, it simply means that God is the healer of their sick. Whenever the people had been ill, God touched them and they were healed. At times God used the skills of a human physician, but in all cases He healed His people. The experience was the same, no matter where it took place.

The word "rapha", (רָפָא), literally means to mend by stitching, to cure, to repair, to make thoroughly whole. It is the same word which is used in Isaiah, where the prophet spoke so tenderly,

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. Isaiah 53:5

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Because the text is not specific concerning the nature of this healing, I feel compelled to believe that it speaks of both physical and spiritual healing.

The Scriptures speak extensively of the healing ministry of the Father and Jesus and is at least in part an expression of divine compassion.

*So Moses cried out to the LORD (Jehovah), "O God (El), please heal her."
Numbers 12:13*

There is a cause/effect relationship between the cry of Moses and the healing of Miriam. This is in spite of the fact that she had tried to undercut the authority of Moses, her brother.

Repeatedly, though not exclusively, people were healed in answer to prayer. David spoke to this issue in Psalm 6.

Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am faint; O LORD (Jehovah), heal me, for my bones are in agony. Psalm 6:2

This is significant because it reflects at least two conditions:

- The helplessness of the sick
- The certainty of healing of the sick.

Jehovah performed miracles in a long list of diseases and conditions: boils, issue of blood, leprosy, a withered hand, lameness, blindness, speech difficulty, palsy, raising the dead, demon possession, infertility and even healed the land.

We know that both Jews and Gentiles were healed by Jesus. Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, was healed of leprosy. The centurion's servant, probably a Samaritan, was healed. The woman with the issue of blood was obviously a Jewess as was the daughter of Jairus.

Healing requires divine power, but can be received by people of faith. Jesus was giving instructions, before sending out his disciples. He said to them:

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Matthew 10:7

Unfortunately, healing is often thought of only in physical terms. On a number of occasions, Jesus forgave the person's sins and then healed the person's illness. This was precisely what Jesus did when the man was let down through the roof by his friends so that Jesus could heal him.

The presence of sin seems to hinder the healing process. That is what Hosea was dealing with when he wrote:

Whenever I would heal Israel, the sins of Ephraim are exposed and the crimes of Samaria revealed. They practice deceit. Thieves break into houses. Bandits rob in the streets. They do not realize that I remember all their evil deeds. Hosea 7:1, 2

It is clear, in this text, that there is a relationship between the presence of sin in the life and the healing of the body. It is possible that this is part of the reason that Jesus forgave the man, who was let down through the roof, before He healed him. The other side of it is that this was not a consistent approach. The healing of our sin is much more

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important than the healing of the body. The Scriptures teach us that one day we will have a new, glorified body. But just think! God, in Jesus Christ, not only heals physical ailments, he can also heal a sin-sick soul! Who else could do that ?!

Healing involved great power. This is symbolized by the fact that in both the Old and New Testaments the healing was often accomplished by either Jesus or the Father commanding the healing by the power of their words. The same thing was true of creation. God spoke creation into being, rather than by working hard physically to accomplish it. David speaks to this in Psalm 107.

*He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.
Psalm 107:20*

Sometimes, it appears that the presence of sin committed by the individual is related to the availability of healing. David said,

*I said, "O LORD (Jehovah), have mercy on me; heal me, for I have sinned
against you. Psalm 41:4*

The Scriptures mention sin and healing together quite frequently. You will remember that before Jesus healed the man who was let down through the roof, He forgave the man's sin. This awareness leads me to believe that there is some connection between the presence of sin and the reception of healing.

Faith played a major role in the healing ministry of Jesus. The woman with the issue of blood knew that if she could touch the fringe of Jesus' garment she would be well. She explained this when questioned by Jesus. This was His response.

*Jesus turned and saw her, "Take heart, daughter," he said, "Your faith has
healed you." Matthew 9:22*

The patterns of Jesus' healing and that of the Father are in many respects quite similar. Healing was usually in response to a petition, and often the healing was the product of a divine word, rather than a divine action. In both instances no disease was greater than Their power to heal.

In Isaiah we read that the suffering of Jesus was the enabling of our healing.

*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our
iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his
wounds we are healed. Isaiah 53:5*

I am convinced that here Isaiah refers to Jesus. I am further convinced that the healing, made possible through His wounds, is a healing for both the physical and spiritual needs of all people. It was "by his wounds," because of the effectiveness of His sacrifice, that we are healed.

Therefore, take courage! Even in our present situation, our frail bodies often need the healing touch that only God can provide. Remember, in a world of broken people and broken lives, Jehovah is the God who heals us.

THE LORD OUR SHEPHERD

This name for God has strong pastoral overtones. There would be mixed feelings in the mind of a first century Jewish person to hear someone call God a shepherd.

"The LORD our Shepherd", (יהוה רֹעֵי) in the Hebrew, is a compound name for God and is made up of the following words:

- **LORD** - "Jehovah" (יהוה) - This unspeakable name was used by the Jews to focus attention on God's eternity and judgment. A thorough discussion of the meaning of this name is presented in chapter six.
- **Shepherd** - "Rohi" (רֹעֵי) - comes from the root word "raah" (רָעָה) - which means to tend, to pasture, to graze, to rule a flock, to keep company with, to entreat, to pastor, to wander with. Another meaning focuses on entreating and feeding. It is the task of the shepherd to do whatever is necessary to get the sheep to eat. He is the nourisher of his flock.

The best known passage involving this name is Psalm 23.

The LORD (Jehovah) is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing. Psalm 23:1

David emphasized several pastoral qualities in this Psalm. He compared God with a shepherd. God often inspired Biblical writers to use writing tools, such as this comparison, to reveal Himself. He took something which the people knew very well and used it to describe something which they did not understand at all.

A Jewish person would have ambivalent feelings about comparing God with a shepherd. A real shepherd had many admirable qualities, but these men were considered moral outcasts. They were not permitted to stay overnight at an inn. No woman would be happy to know her daughter was married to a shepherd, but David, who had been a shepherd, knew what shepherds were really like.

You probably know Psalm 23 by heart. Nevertheless, let me identify the comparisons David made.

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing. Psalm 23:1

David was saying that a shepherd provides for his flock. In the same way, Jehovah, the divine shepherd, was such a good provider, looking after the welfare of His people, that David lacked for absolutely nothing.

*He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters...
Psalms 23:2*

Sheep are not prone to do everything they need to do. When the sheep have eaten, a good shepherd will make them lie down to rest. Sometimes, when sheep have overeaten, they are unable to lie down on their own. That is when the shepherd will take the crook of his staff and force the front legs down so that the sheep can lie down and rest. He will take them to unruffled, unmuddied waters because he knows they will not drink from anything but still water. Choppy, ruffled waters could be the cause of their drowning and being led beside quiet waters means security, safety, no fear of drowning. God cares for His people

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the same way a good shepherd leads his sheep to quiet waters. A good shepherd is a guide for his flock in all ways.

He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Psalms 23:3

Sheep have no sense of direction at all. They just follow their noses and this often leads them into great difficulty. A good shepherd will lead his sheep in safe directions. In the same manner, God guides His people when they do not know where they are going or how to get where they should be going. A good shepherd is always with his sheep.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me, your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Psalm 23: 4

A hireling does not feel totally responsible for the sheep and might go home and leave the sheep unprotected, even at night. A good shepherd stays with his sheep. When he does go home, he takes them with him. Often, good shepherds moved their tents for the benefit of the sheep.

When the sheep feel the gentle nudge of the shepherd's rod, they become calm. The rod and staff are used to guide and defend the sheep and they know it. They know they are safe when their shepherd is near. In the same way, God reassures His people in difficult times as a shepherd gives comfort and contentment to his flock.

There are other references in Scripture to God as a shepherd. Asaph, in Psalm 80, also uses the image of the shepherd to help describe what God is like.

Hear us, O Shepherd (Rohi) of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock; you who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth, before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Psalm 80:1, 2

The clan of Joseph had experienced difficult times. Joseph himself had a difficult time and was taken advantage of on many occasions. The land which Joseph's descendants received, in Canaan, was a difficult place to control. Still, God enabled them to have a place in the Promised Land. Asaph described God as the gentle guide of that clan which no one had protected, nor had looked after.

Isaiah spoke with tender insight when he spoke of God in the vernacular about being a shepherd.

He tends the flock like a shepherd: he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young. Isaiah 40:11

There is a tenderness in Isaiah's understanding of God. A good shepherd does not wait for his flock to get hungry. He anticipates that need and gently moves the flock into areas where they can feed without trauma.

A good shepherd would give the lambs special care. Shortly after a lamb is born, it is unable to keep up with the rest of the flock. The good shepherd knows this and carries it when it gets tired. A newborn lamb can get cold very easily. A good shepherd will hold that newborn lamb close to himself so that his body heat will warm the little one, if necessary.

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God knows our need and our frailty. As a good shepherd holds the quivering newborn lamb close to himself, so God tenderly holds us close to Himself to meet every need which is beyond our ability to cope.

The ewe, when she has given birth to her lamb, is tired, exhausted. She must care for her little one but does not have as much energy as she had before giving birth. She, too, needs special care. She cannot keep up if the flock moves quickly. When there are ewes and lambs with the flock, a good shepherd is careful to move them at a slower pace. This, too, is what God does for the weakened and needy of His flock.

Ezekiel prophesied against the religious leaders of Israel. In the midst of this pronouncement of judgment upon them, Ezekiel compared God to a good shepherd. In chapter 34, Ezekiel speaks of God as such. The sheep may get scattered, but the good shepherd searches for his sheep until he finds them. This is the prevenient grace of God reaching out to them. (Prevenient grace is the grace of God, which we do not and cannot deserve, but which nevertheless searches after us until we receive the gift of God's grace - eternal life.)

Ezekiel spoke about the nature of God with deep understanding when he quotes God as saying,

I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign (Adonai) LORD (Jehovah). I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong will I destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice. Ezekiel 34:15, 16

There is a depth of mercy in the heart of a shepherd. Notice how Ezekiel identifies the qualities of the divine shepherd with those of a good earthly shepherd:

- He will search for the lost sheep. This was a dangerous and risky task for any shepherd because the terrain of Israel's land was rough and steep. A shepherd could fall and hurt himself or even get killed. Then, too, there was always the danger of encountering wild animals in search of their food. One must remember that these shepherds were often alone and there would be no one to lend assistance if they were in trouble. But God will, as a shepherd would, take the risk of encountering obstacles in order to bring back His people from every nation.
- The shepherd will bring back the strays. His acceptance of the tendency of sheep to wander is phenomenal.
- He will bind up the injured. There is compassion in the shepherd as he binds up the wounds of the helpless, hurting creatures.
- He will give special care to strengthen those weakened by injury or attack by wild animals.
- Some sheep, "the sleek and the strong," will push others away from food and water to have more for themselves. The shepherd was required to keep them from doing this.

The Biblical authors make the comparison between God and good shepherds because God does for His people what shepherds do for their sheep. He takes the risks.

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He makes allowances for our waywardness. He binds up our brokenness. He is deeply concerned about those who are weak. He will defend us against those who would take advantage of our weakness.

Ezekiel's image gives us an insight into the compassion of God for people, who like sheep, are prone to wander.

The prophet Amos points our attention in much the same direction.

This is what the LORD (Jehovah) says: "As a shepherd saves from the lion's mouth only two leg bones or a piece of an ear, so will the Israelites be saved, those who sit in Samaria on the edge of their beds and on the corner of their couches." Amos 3:12

In Old Testament times, not all owners of sheep would care for their own flock. They would, if they were wealthy enough, hire others to tend them. The shepherds knew that sheep were easy prey for wild animals. They knew that these powerful animals would attack the flock if at all possible. Shepherds, however, were required to challenge a predator who took one of the sheep. This was a part of their responsibility and took great courage to perform. They had to place their life at risk for that of the animal. The owners also knew, however, that hired shepherds would sometimes flee rather than try to defend the sheep. At other times they would sell sheep and say that the helpless creature had been killed by a wild animal. The owners, therefore, developed a rule: if the hireling ran away and did not attempt to rescue the sheep, then he must cover the cost of the lost sheep. If, on the other hand, the hireling attempted to rescue the sheep, but was able to rescue only two leg bones or a piece of an ear, then the owner would not hold him responsible. This would be evidence that he had tried to rescue the sheep.

Amos said that Israel would be threatened. God, the Shepherd of Israel, risked everything for the return of His people.

Each Old Testament personage we have quoted, described some quality of the character of God through the image of the shepherd. It is a clear and beautiful way to focus attention on just how compassionate God really is.

Like the flock, all of us have wandered. All of us have gone in directions that were not in our best interests. Nevertheless, the compassion of God knows no limits. He will seek us out. He will place us in situations we need to occupy even when it does not seem right to us at the time. When the fear factor is high and our abilities are low, remember that God is our shepherd.

THE LORD OF HEAVEN

This name can be found in at least three different forms in the Hebrew of the Old Testament:

- LORD God of heaven - "Jehovah Elohim" -
(יהוה אֱלֹהִים הַיְיָ הַשָּׁמַיִם)
- God of heaven - "Elohim" - (אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם)
- God of heaven - "El" - (אֵל הַשָּׁמַיִם)

In this study, we will deal with each of the three forms separately.

THE LORD GOD OF HEAVEN

This compound name is made up of two other names for God.

- **LORD** - "Jehovah" - (יהוה) - As we indicated in a previous study, this great name for God focuses on His eternal majesty and justice.
- **God** - "Elohae" - (אֱלֹהֵי) - This is a form of the name "Elohim." A fuller discussion of this name can be found in chapter one. The focus is on the majesty and mercy of God.
- **"Of heaven"** - (הַשָּׁמַיִם) this was a way of signaling greatness. The heavens, the abode of God, was considered greater than the earth.

This compound name places a primary emphasis on God's pre-existence and authority and a lesser emphasis on His majesty and mercy. The addition of the phrase "of heaven" increases the stress on His greatness.

There are six different passages which use this form. Notice the context in which it is used.

This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "The LORD (Jehovah), the God (Elohim) of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you - may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up." II Chronicles 36:23

In the time of Jeremiah, Cyrus was king of Persia. Though he was not Jewish, Cyrus knew that the Lord God of Heaven had given him his kingdom. He also understood that God had charged him to build the temple in Jerusalem. This was a startling statement for Cyrus, the greatest king in the world of his day. When the God of Israel can command the greatest king in the world and he obeys, it emphasizes just how great and powerful God really is.

In Nehemiah is another expression of this name.

Then I said, "O LORD, God (Jehovah Elohim) of heaven, the great and awesome God (El), who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants the people of Israel." Nehemiah 1:5, 6

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The city of Jerusalem was in shambles, the walls in tragic disrepair. As Nehemiah contemplated this terrible, impossible situation, he fasted and prayed to the Lord the God of Heaven for whom the impossible was no limitation. God moved on the heart of the pagan king and he then gave Nehemiah permission to return and rebuild the walls.

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This name is a form of "Elohim." Again, it focuses attention on the majesty of God, especially in situations where His mercy is evident.

There are at least 12 passages of Scripture which include this name for God. These references are all found in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Daniel.

Ezra understood the meaning of this name very well. This is what he was talking about when he said,

Whatever is needed - young bulls, rams, male lambs for burnt offerings to the God (Elohim) of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and oil, as requested by the priests in Jerusalem - must be given them daily without fail, so that they may offer sacrifices to the God (Elohim) of heaven and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons. Ezra 6:9, 10

The enemies of Israel reported to Cyrus about the rebuilding of the temple. He surprised them by not only defending the Israelites, but also announcing that the money for the project would come from tax revenues of the land of the complainers.

Ezra used this name on at least seven occasions, which is more than any other Biblical author. He used it to help his readers understand that the God whom Cyrus, the greatest ruler in the world, obeyed was the majestic, powerful God of mercy, the God of Heaven. This is an image of power at its highest possible level, but the emphasis is on His mercy.

Nehemiah also focused his attention on the God of Heaven, "Elohim."

When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God (Elohim) of heaven. Nehemiah 1:4

Nehemiah thought of God as the one to whom he could turn in times of trauma and sorrow. God was concerned about his dilemma and desired to minister to him.

THE SOVEREIGN GOD OF HEAVEN

EI - (אֱלֹהִים)- This name for God focuses attention on Him as the Almighty Sovereign one. In the Hebrew, it comes from the root word "ayil" (אֵייל) which literally means "twisted." From this we get the idea of unusual strength. It was also used to describe things of unusual strength - oak tree, a bull, a pilaster to strengthen a weak wall.

Daniel, too, focused attention on the "God of Heaven" in reference to prayer.

He urged them to plead for mercy from the God (EI) of heaven concerning the mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. During the night the mystery was revealed to

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*Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God (El) of heaven.....
Daniel 2:18, 19*

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had had a disturbing dream. His astrologers were to tell him the dream and interpret it or they would be killed. Daniel held a favored position in the Babylonian court because he had been able to interpret a dream previously for the king. Now this Jewish slave, who had risen to power in Babylon, along with the astrologers, faced a life-threatening demand by the king. Daniel asked his three friends to pray to the God of heaven, for he was convinced that He would hear their desperate cry and give miraculous help, and that is exactly what happened.

The Psalmist, probably David, wrote a beautiful hymn to the enduring love of God. He closed the Psalm with these words:

*Give thanks to the God (El) of heaven. His love endures forever.
Psalm 136:26*

David understood power. All through this Psalm, he had been exalting the enduring love of Elohim, Adonai and Jehovah. Only in the final, climactic verse does he turn to the use of the name sometimes translated "Sovereign," "El." David knew that power was important, but it is a two-edged sword. If power is beneficent toward you, it is a blessing. If power, however, is not beneficent toward you, then it is a great peril. Having given a long list of examples of the enduring love of God, David concludes by giving thanks to Him using the name which speaks most strongly of God's unique power, which is characterized by enduring love.

All three of these names for the God of heaven focus either upon the unequalled power of God or His compassion which causes His people to seek His help in their time of distress.

We talk of God's power, but our common failure to expect God to do the impossible makes one wonder if we really believe that God is all-powerful. If God's enduring love and power is dependable, then the question haunts us, why do we so often live our lives as though devastation was inevitable?

THE ROCK

The LORD (Jehovah) is my rock (cela), my fortress and my deliverer; my God (Elohim) is my rock (Tsuwr), in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. II Samuel 22:2, 3

In the twenty-six Old Testament passages that use this name, there are two different Hebrew words which express its meaning:

- "Cela" or (עֲלֵי) means to be lofty, a craggy inaccessible place, a fortress, a stronghold.
- "Tsuwr" or (צֹרֵר), a cliff, a sharp rock, a refuge, mighty God.

Fifteen of the twenty-six Old Testament passages that use the name "rock," came from the pen of David. All these Old Testament passages are hymns of praise to God who is the stronghold, the fortress and refuge of those who trust in Him.

David and his men were in west central Judah - an area which they knew very well. It was mountainous. Often they had hidden from Saul's army in this rocky refuge, and from the seclusion of these mighty rocks, they had surprised both the Philistines and Saul's army several times.

In the passage quoted above, David and his men had been fighting against the Philistines themselves and with the huge relatives of Goliath. They had killed these giants, and when David fought with the Philistines, it was never just one nation fighting against another. The warriors always understood that there was a theological conflict between the God of Israel and the gods of the Philistines.

Against the background of a victory over the Philistines and their gods, David sang the song recorded in II Samuel 22 and 23. It was a song of praise and thanksgiving to God for His mighty deliverance. The words of this song also appear in Psalm 18. Life in David's time was transitory. If life was not threatened by the Philistines, then it was by the drought. The sands of the nearby desert were never in one place for a full day. They were as shifting as ocean waves. These people needed something that was solid, something dependable, something that would not change.

David sang of a mountain stronghold where the enemy army could not penetrate. He thought of the sharp rocky cliffs that formed an impregnable refuge for his men. In this song, David spoke of God as the Rock, but he was dealing with the idea of a changeless defender.

Ours has become a disposable society. We don't get wristwatches fixed any more. We throw them away and get new ones because it is much cheaper to do so. We increasingly use plastic table ware and throw them away after they have been used. We abandon relationships rather than take the time, pain and care to restore them. In a disposable, throwaway world, there is a Rock, there is One who does not change in a world of flux; One, who like the mountains, remains while the shifting sands of modern values leave one uncertain of values and directions in life.

In II Samuel 23:3, David reflects upon his rocky fortress, even God, who had given him victory over the Philistines. Every time, the "Rock" is a reference to a refuge, a defense. In this instance, David reflects that Jehovah, this Rock of Israel, spoke to him. God is the protector of His people, but He speaks personally with His servant in words of

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righteousness and in an everlasting covenant. He gives direction to life in terms we could not otherwise discover for ourselves. In another similar circumstance, David cried out to his rock in these words:

Since you are my rock (tsuwr) and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead me and guide me. Free me from the trap that is set for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O LORD (Jehovah), the God (El) of truth. Psalm 31:3-5

God is the rock of refuge, but He is more. He leads and guides His people as a mountain guide leads a group through treacherous terrain. God guides His people away from the traps that are set for their downfall.

Near the end of his life, David reflected on the relationship of God with His people. In this reflection, David wrote these memorable words.

In you, O LORD (Jehovah), I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame. Rescue me and deliver me in your righteousness; turn your ear to me and save me. Be my rock (tsuwr) of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, O my God (Elohim), from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of evil and cruel men. Psalm 71:1-4

God is not an occasional refuge where one can turn now and then. God, the rock stronghold of his people, is the place where they continually resort. In the palace or on the battlefield, God is their lofty fortress, the cliff of refuge where none can harm.

Long before David, in Deuteronomy 32:31, Moses gave his last message to Israel before they crossed into the land of promise without him. He observed that every people had something, some Rock in which they put their trust. The Rock of Moses, the Rock of Israel was not like any other rock, even by the reckoning of the pagan.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul caught the spirit of David's reflection and expressed it in these terms. Notice that Paul has fused four Old Testament images together in his description.

Our forefathers were all under the cloud. They all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. I Corinthians 10:1b-5

- He spoke of their fathers- Israel - who were all under the cloud - the cloud and the pillar of fire. These are symbols of God's presence and guidance. It reminded Paul that God was with them in the deliverance.
- Their fathers all passed through the sea - this was a symbol of the way God was their refuge, their protection.
- They ate the spiritual food, the manna, the divine provision for their survival.
- They drank from the spiritual rock - where they received water in the desert when their supply was exhausted.

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Paul concluded the image by identifying the rock - "and the rock was Christ."

There are times when the onslaught of life is more than our body and spirit can handle. We fear that in such times we will be destroyed. Both Paul and David understood that these are the times when we have a rock who will stand between us and the devastating forces of evil. God does not promise to excuse us from such hardship. He does promise that He will be with us; He will be the rock behind whom we can hide; He will be the defense for our defenselessness!

GOD IS OUR HIDING PLACE

One thing I asked of the LORD (Jehovah), this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD (Jehovah), all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD (Jehovah) and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock. Psalm 27:4, 5

Only David literally speaks of God as "our hiding place." The word for "hiding" is "cether" (סֶתֶר) in the Hebrew. It means to conceal, to cover, to disguise, a place to hide, a place of protection.

David was quite knowledgeable about the need for a place to hide. He had to hide more than almost any other person in Scripture. He went from place to place hiding from Saul. The future king of Israel secreted himself in caves and hidden valleys in the wilderness and mountains to avoid the army of the Philistines. David said,

You are my hiding place (cether); you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. Psalm 32:7

Such a hiding place is essential to those who face imminent danger. David lived that experience until Saul died. He knew, however, that God would hide him from Saul and deliver him from danger to reign on the throne of Israel. He later lived it again when his son Absalom turned against him.

David had an unflinching faith in God. In Psalm 119, the Psalm of the Law, David said,

I hate double-minded men, but I love your law. You are my refuge (cether) and my shield; I have put my hope in your word. Psalm 119:113, 114

David made the Law the source of his hope of survival. He repeatedly states, in this Psalm, that if he will cling to the teaching of Torah, God will deliver him from any threat of destruction. He saw the Scriptures as the place where God hides those who love Him.

The significance of Psalm 27:4, 5, with which we started this chapter, is many faceted. David describes the place of worship, but he does so in terms rich in cultural significance. He speaks of the place of worship like he would speak of a desert tent. When you are the guest in a desert-dweller's tent, certain laws apply. The host is responsible for your care for three days. He must care for your every need up to the extent of his ability. While you are under his roof, he must protect your life with his own. David was drawing a comparison. He did not want to spend 24 hours a day in the tabernacle. In the struggles of his life, David wanted God to be responsible for his life the way a desert host was responsible for his guest. He wanted God to provide for his needs as long as he lived, the way a desert host would provide for the visitor to his tent. David wanted God to affirm him in forgiveness and to identify with his personality and character, the way a desert host would be required to do.

An illustration of the desert host is found in the story of Lot. When the angels visited Lot in Sodom, the men of the city came desiring to do shameful things to them. Lot made every effort to protect these angels because it was his civil responsibility.

In Psalm 27, with which we began this chapter, David was saying that he had asked God to let him dwell in His house in harmony and security, not for three days, but

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for life. He wanted to spend his life expressing gratitude to God for His hospitality and for the protection He had given him. Only under the protection of God did David feel really safe.

Moses also speaks in these specific terms.

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High (Elyon) will rest in the shadow of the Almighty (Shaddai). I will say of the LORD (Jehovah), "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God (Elohim), in whom I trust."
Psalm 91:1, 2*

This entire Psalm focuses upon God as a hiding place, a shelter. Notice in each illustration concerning God as our hiding place, there is a strong emphasis on trust. A refuge, because of its nature, can either be a secure place from danger or a trap. David was safe in the cave. But Saul discovered where David was. At that moment, the secure refuge became a trap, because David had no way of escape. Both David and Moses were convinced that God was a secure refuge with no fear of being trapped by the enemy.

Solomon also understood the protection of God. In a long series of statements, which sound very much like a father-son, heart-to-heart talk, Solomon concludes,

He who fears the Lord (Jehovah) has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge. Proverbs 14:26

Solomon has added an additional dimension to the message of his father David and of Moses. He does not deny that God is a refuge. He affirms it. He does say, however, that the refuge of God is made available to us as we fear, as we give reverent obedience to the Lord. This insight is crucial.

As he does so often in his proverbs, Solomon uses two parallel statements in a single teaching. The second is similar to the first, but usually adds exciting instruction to what he has already said. That is true in this verse. Solomon teaches us that reverent obedience is the key to our secure fortress. He then adds a beautiful thought - this reverence will also result in a refuge for our children. God will watch over our little ones. As we fear God, our example will encourage our children to fear God also.

In the same way, the great news about heaven is not golden streets and gates of pearl. The good news of heaven is that God welcomes us into His house for eternity, not just for three days. He will watch over us and provide for every need for eternity. We are accepted as the prodigal was accepted by his loving father.

In every generation the temptation to trust in ourselves is great. The intense danger for those who will take an uncompromising stand for God is beyond the imagination of most of us. (I am writing these words while staying as the guest of one of those saintly young men who willingly risked everything to share the good news of the Gospel as long as the communist regime, in the Ukraine, forbade them to do so). Our lives are bombarded by an insidious tempter. In a land where righteousness was once applauded, we inch closer to a time when proclaiming one's faith in Christ, and the lifestyle this demands, will be as costly as it has ever been in atheistic situations. In the midst of it all - God is our hiding place.

GOD OF GODS

This is a name which had much more meaning for people of Old Testament times than it does for us. We are basically a monotheistic people who serve only one God. Because of this, idols are not real for us. We do not take gods of wood and stone seriously. There are many primitive people in our world today who worship many gods. Many of these gods are portions of nature - earth, mountains, oceans, sun, moon and sky, or forces of nature - thunder, tornadoes, rain and earthquakes. They take their gods very seriously. The neighbors of Israel were just as serious about the worship of their many gods.

The Hebrew words used to describe this name are the same in each case - "God of gods" "Elohae elohim" (אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים). Both words are forms of the name "Elohim," which is used in two ways in the Old Testament:

- Elohim - describes Israel's God - the majestic God of mercy.
- elohim - was sometimes used to describe the numberless gods of the nations.

Moses used this name in its most beautiful form.

*For the LORD (Jehovah) your God (Elohim) is God (Elohae) of gods (elohim) and Lord (Adonai) of lords (adonim), the great God (El) mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.
Deuteronomy 10:17*

Moses was the first to use this name. He was painfully aware of Israel's proneness to disobey the Lord and serve other gods. Notice that he uses five different names for God in one verse.

NAME	EMPHASIS
Lord your God	mercy and justice
God of gods	merciful God with power over idols
Lord of lords	supreme authority
the great God	omnipotent
mighty and awesome	inspires reverence

Moses painted a picture of the greatness of God in one verse. In the balance of the paragraph, Moses described Israel's God and tells them how to respond to their God - God loves aliens and we are to love them also. We are to fear Him and make Him the center of our covenants.

Daniel also uses this name on two occasions.

The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God (Elohim) is the God (Elohae) of gods (elohim) and the LORD (Mare - domineering master) of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery." Daniel 2:47

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Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream when all the Babylonian magicians were helpless to do so. Daniel made it clear that it was God who enabled him to interpret the dream.

The king was so deeply moved that he fell prostrate before Daniel and called Israel's God the "God of gods and Lord of kings." This is the strongest praise the king could give to God.

In Daniel 11:36, part of the prophetic section, he describes a king who does terrible things against the "God of gods." The emphasis on the name deals with his greatness. God is so great it is foolish for a king to say or do anything against Him. We don't serve carvings of wood and stone, but we can make position, prestige, wealth and possessions our first priorities as though these were cast in pure gold.

The message of the Scriptures for that time and for our day of growing idolatry is that Jehovah is the God of all gods, the LORD of all lords. Nothing can be allowed to hold a place of higher priority in our lives.

GOD IS OUR FATHER

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught the crowd about His father and ours. He gave at least 21 specific messages about the Father and spoke of Him in these terms:

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Matthew 5:48

Perfection is a startling thought to a Christian. This is because we know our proneness to failure and disobedience. The Greek word for "perfect" is "telios" or "τέλειος." It does not refer to flawlessness so much as it does to completeness, to be of full age, mature. The childish will not be able to forgive, but will retain their hurt and offense. The mature person understands that it is very human to offend and that he must forgive in order to be forgiven. A child offends his father in many different ways and occasions, but the father forgives because he knows the child's immaturity. In the same way, our heavenly Father is mature. He forgives us because He knows we have not grown up into the fullness of what He wants us to be. Our Father forgives and understands our weakness.

In the beginning of Matthew, chapter six, Jesus talks with the crowd about the giving of alms. In this statement He also tells us something about the character of the Father.

But wherein you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret will reward you. Matthew 6:3, 4

Jesus was saying that God is all knowing, even to the point of discerning our secret intent. Here again, Jesus took a common experience and used it to tell us something about God which we could not otherwise grasp. An earthly father is not omniscient. He, nevertheless, can often identify what a child is doing before it is done. God, however, is omniscient and discerns the secret things we think and do before they come to light in the public's eyes.

Talking to the large crowd about prayer, Jesus made several statements that tell us something about it. They also tell us something important about the Father.

This is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Matthew 6:9-15

Some people take this passage as instruction which they must recite as a prayer, word for word. They also understand it to mean that they can only pray in the name of the "Father," which they understand to mean that they must add the words "in Jesus' name" to every petition. It is appropriate to pray in the name of the "Father." It is also appropriate to use any other name by which God has identified Himself.

In this passage, "Father" is described as a provider. He knows what we need and can meet every need. There is no necessary sexual identity or relationship in the use of the term "Father." Jesus rather took the important symbol "father," which everyone

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understood from experience, and used it to help the crowd understand something that seemed totally beyond their comprehension. God had qualities which Jewish people identified with their own fathers. Jesus used this image to help them understand several things:

God was totally different from what people thought of the pagan idols. People were taught that idols would respond only to prayers repeated over and over again, even thoughtlessly. The more often the prayer was repeated, the better the chance of being heard. God was different. He would hear because you prayed, not because you said the words so often. This stresses the contrast between God and the pagan idols. God actually heard you. Pagan idols couldn't hear no matter how long or loudly you prayed. The emphasis was on **His** mercy, not on **our** having said the words a required number of times.

God is in heaven. This is not a suggestion that God is far off and does not know who we are or what we need. It rather suggests that He resides in a place far superior to what we have made of His creation.

The Father's name is to be hallowed. In the Scriptures, one's name is suggestive of his character. When Jesus said that His Father's name is to be hallowed, He was saying that He is holy. This stands in sharp contrast to the Greek and Roman gods who were anything but holy.

Jesus said, in effect, "May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This is an affirmation of two things:

God is already a heavenly sovereign. His will is always accomplished there.

God is also sovereign over all the earth. His will is not always sought here, now, but that is the ultimate direction of history. There will be a time when God's will is to be as sovereign on earth as it is now in heaven. Both in heaven and on earth, the Father is sovereign over all.

God is the provider of all our needs. Jesus viewed the Father as the one who was responsible for the fact that we have food to sustain us each day.

"Forgive us our debts." The word "debts" is "opheilema" or (ὀφείλημα) in the Greek. It stands for something owed. It also means a debt due to a fault and is used in this sense here. God is the one who cancels the responsibility of our failures and sins. Forgiveness of sins is a part of the description of His nature, not just a fact about Him.

"Do not lead us into temptation." This is a sharp contrast. Everyone knew that the Roman gods were capricious. They were thought to be prone to lead you into every possible compromising situation. God was different. It is not as though God searches for an opportunity to devastate our lives. This is more a statement about the compassion of God than it is a statement about temptation.

"Deliver us from the evil one." This petition suggests at least two things about the nature and character of God:

The divine intention of the Father is in the direction of goodness and righteousness, the opposite of evil.

The omnipotence of the Father is such that He can deliver us from the designs of the enemy, the evil one.

There is a shocking declaration in verses 14, 15. Read them again.

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For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 6:14, 15

Jesus was talking about consistency. God is consistent, even in His benevolence. If we are merciful and forgiving, God will forgive us. It is not because He is reluctant to forgive, but because He longs for consistency in us.

The other side of this issue is plain. If we fail to forgive, He will not forgive us. God's judgment is as real as His mercy. They are part of each other.

Jesus also speaks of the Father while describing the proper outlook on fasting. He said,

But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen: and your Father who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Matthew 6:17, 18

In this discussion of fasting, Jesus described the Father as knowing at a level beyond our own. The Father can see things that we cannot see. He can discern both the attitude of the heart, the desire to relate to God in fasting, as well as the unseen sacrifice of our daily food. God the Father sees this, though it is not done in public.

There is also an emphasis here on the fact that the Father will reward us for humble, unnoticed sacrifice and service. It is a picture of the generosity of the Father.

Again in verse 26, Jesus gives us another insight into the character of God as Father. Discussing the need to flee worry, He said:

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Matthew 6:26

The emphasis in this verse, concerning the character of the Father, is that He is provident. As a good earthly father is fond of all children, still he holds a very special place for his own; so our heavenly Father loves all His creation, but He holds a very special place for all human beings whom He created in His own image. God treasures each of us.

In Matthew 6:31, 32, Jesus uses this name again. He said:

So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. Matthew 6:31, 32

Jesus described the basic needs of life - food, drink and clothing. These are the preoccupation of the pagan world. Speaking of God as Father, He paralleled an earthly father, whom we know very well, with a heavenly Father whom we know less well. Jesus used the image of the earthly father to help us understand who God, our heavenly Father, is.

The Greek word for "father" is "pataer" (πατήρ.) It is a picture of one who nourishes, protects and upholds. It is associated with the New Birth - the heavenly Father is the one who initiated this new relationship of forgiveness which brings us into His family.

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The whole image of "Father" involves certain ideas and understandings:

- "Father" speaks of origin - God is the one who created not only our world, but also our very lives.
- It identifies character. Every person who grows up under the care of a father is strongly influenced by that man whether the person is aware of it or not. My own personality and characteristics were seriously influenced by my father. I walk like him. I think in many of the same patterns he thought. I value many things he valued. When people look at my life they can see many of his characteristics. It is clear to others that I am my father's son.
- The idea of "Father" identifies one whose presence is a source of confidence. When a child becomes frightened in the darkness of night, the large, gentle touch of a "father's" hand or the sound of daddy's calm voice brings a reassurance to the frightened youngster.
- "Father" identifies the source of one's inheritance. In that culture, the father of the family was considered the owner of all family possessions. At or near the time of his death, these possessions were shared with his sons. This inheritance, however, was more than physical possessions. My inheritance is a symbol of my father's life and presence. He shaped my thinking about people, and about life. He instilled values in me which were different from the culture in which I grew up.
- As children of our Heavenly Father we are the recipients of His inheritance. We inherit something of His authority. Members of royal families inherit the power to rule. As members of God's family, we inherit the power to rule which is inherent in this royal family. It will, however, be a rule in righteousness, as strange as that is in our culture.
- "Father" identifies God as the source of our power. In the position of "father" in a family, a man carries a sense of responsibility. God is the source of responsibility in our lives. God protects our lives as a father protects his wife and children. God took the responsibility to provide for His family just as a Jewish father took great joy and humble pride in providing for the physical needs of his family.
- The name "father" identifies God as the source of our identity. Peter's name was really Simon Bar-Jonah - Simon, the son of Jonah. It identified him with his father, the one who was responsible for bringing him into the world. He was also the one whose characteristics shaped his personality and character. Today, we are called to be so much like our "Heavenly Father" that people will sense His characteristics in the way we live.
- "Father" identifies the one who taught the family about the Law of God. If you look at the prayers of Jesus, you will notice that each one begins with "Father."

Think of the meaning of this term for a minute.

- **IF** "father" identifies a person's family heritage, and **IF** you are a child of the Heavenly Father, **THEN** what will you reflect of the family of God?

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- IF "father" identifies the character of God for us, **THEN** what is there in our way of life that identifies us with His character?
- IF "father" identifies the source of our confidence, **THEN** what evidence of confidence and peace can be found in our lives?
- IF "Father" identifies the source of our inheritance, **THEN** what evidence of this inheritance is present?
- IF "Father" identifies the source of our power, **THEN** what is the evidence of His power in our lives?
- IF "Father" designates the source of our identity, **THEN** what evidence is there of a family resemblance?
- IF God is our "Father," **THEN** there ought to be a family resemblance.

In Matthew 7:11, Jesus again speaks of God as Father. Notice the terms in which He speaks:

If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him! Matthew 7:11

There is a kind of holy generosity, beyond our comprehension, which pervades Jesus' description of the Father. That is what the Father is like, and we have a right to expect Him to be that way.

Again, Jesus was talking to the crowd about living what they believe. In that discourse He made this statement about the Father:

Not everyone who says "LORD, LORD," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Matthew 7:21

Like an earthly father, God willingly hears our promises, but He is more concerned about our actions. Our heavenly Father is a God of action, not just promises. This stands in stark contrast with the uncaring relationship between the idols and those who serve them in fear.

There is also the element of accountability in this statement of Jesus. Anyone can talk about obedience, but it is something different to actually obey. Anyone can call Jesus "LORD," but it is much different to be His obedient servant.

On one occasion, Jesus was teaching. Word came to Him that His mother and brothers were standing outside, waiting to see Him. Jesus responded to this information:

*Jesus replied, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers, for whoever does the **will** of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." Matthew 12:50*

Speaking of the "will of my father in heaven," Jesus was saying that the Father has a specific will, a lifestyle and agenda that He wants to see implemented in His world.

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On another occasion, while Jesus was talking with the Samaritan woman, Jesus said to His disciples,

*"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the **will** of him who sent me and to finish his work." John 4:34*

The word "will" is "θέλημα" in the Greek and usually suggests intense desire or design. When speaking of the will of the Father, some people think of an unbending determination. The "will of the Father" contains this, but there is far more.

In I Thessalonians, Paul gives us an insight into the will of God.

It is God's will that you should be holy; that you should avoid sexual immorality. I Thessalonians 4:3

God's will is a gracious desire for good, not severe restriction.

There are a number of other New Testament passages which give us some idea of the nature of the will of the Father:

Galatians 1:4 - The Father willed that Jesus be given to rescue us from the present evil age. This is the Father's will for our redemption.

Ephesians 1:9 - It is the Father's will to bring all things in heaven and earth under the head of Christ. This is a generous desire that under the headship of Christ our need for restoration may be supplied and our need for fellowship and support might be met in His glorious presence.

Ephesians 5:17 - The Father's will desires His people to be filled with the Spirit. The Spirit is the divine person through whom God ministers to His people in a host of ways.

The name "Father" is less a title than a description of God's character. Throughout the New Testament, there are repeated affirmations of the qualities described in the Sermon on the Mount. It is appropriate to call God "Father." It is more important to accept the description of His character and make it an active part of the way we live our lives.

GOD: THE INDEPENDENT ONE

Notice the words of Paul as he preached in Athens,

"And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else." Acts 17:25

If "God is not served by human hands", and if "He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else," then why does He call upon those who believe in Him to witness and do His work? This question is often on the minds of people who take God's person and work seriously.

In both the Old and New Testaments, God specifically called upon His servants to carry out a variety of missions on His behalf. God sent Moses to talk to Pharaoh and to deliver Israel from bondage. God sent Joshua to lead Israel into The Promised Land. God sent Joseph ahead of his family to "preserve them alive". The Holy Spirit sent Paul into Macedonia. Jesus sent His disciples into all the world to preach the Gospel to every nation. The Holy Spirit sent Philip to meet with the Ethiopian Eunuch and thus establish the Coptic Church. God sent the prophets to carry a message to His people. In each instance, God was perfectly capable of carrying out the mission Himself. In fact, God could have done it perfectly, which His servants could not.

There is nothing that God can not do for Himself. He is the Self-Sufficient One. Self-sufficiency, from the human perspective, tends to produce arrogance. With God it is different. In Him, self-sufficiency becomes a means to express love. It enabled God to choose mankind to facilitate His desires. It was not because God was in need. It was because He loved us. God chose to share even with our first parents. From that time until now, God has sought to share Himself, His purpose and His mission with those who love Him. He chose to speak through His servants so that people would not be frightened. This was the situation at Sinai when the people begged Moses to talk with God and for God not to talk with them personally again. They were frightened of the Almighty's presence.

The author of Hebrews deals with this issue in the very first sentence of the Epistle. He said,

"God having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in a Son." Hebrews 1:1, 2

The finiteness of the human mind requires something visible, tangible in order to comprehend the slightest vista of the person and character of God. In love, God spoke through a very human prophet. It was in love that the Father sent His Son, in a totally human form, in order that people might be able to grasp even the tiniest glimpse of His person and character.

Overwhelming greatness is a useful expression of the person of God when it is channeled in love through the life of another human being. The Apostle Paul said it this way,

"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority." Colossians 2:9, 10

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Today, God is still the Self-Sufficient, All-Sufficient One. He is able to do all things needed in His kingdom. He has not changed. But He still calls His servants to tasks of mission on behalf of His kingdom. If you are His faithful servant, He calls you to serve Him. What will you do with that commission?

ETERNAL GOD

The eternal God (Elohim) is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Deuteronomy 33:27

Today the emphasis is on the disposable, the throw away. Everything from wristwatches to doctor's tools, from food service products to clothing are made to be disposable rather than for continued use. These things have no time value at all. Because of this attitude, it is difficult to comprehend a God who is eternal. A beautiful affirmation of the Scriptures is that **God is eternal**.

The dictionary describes "eternal" in these terms: It is timeless, something that has neither beginning nor end, something that is ceaseless, unchangable.

The Hebrew word for "eternal" is "qedem" (קֶדֶם.) This word comes from a root word which means to project oneself. It later was used as to precede, to be before.

God - "Elohim" - (אֱלֹהִים) This name for God, as described in chapter one, focuses our attention on God's majesty and mercy.

David understood that God is eternal. In the Psalms, he said,

Your name, O LORD (Jehovah), endures forever, your renown, O LORD (Jehovah), through all generations. Psalms 135:13

In this passage, David spoke of Jehovah as eternal. This is a strong statement because a major thrust of the name Jehovah is that He is eternal. David stresses this eternity by his repetition.

God is the U nique One whose name will never cease to be held in high esteem. God was as majestic when time began as He will be when time ceases to exist. God is eternal, whether Israel was victorious or struggling; whether David was enjoying great support or encountering serious confrontation. God's name endured on the last day of David's reign as intensely as on the day Samuel anointed him king. The fact that God is eternal is the basis upon which we establish our understanding of changelessness.

Look at the Old Testament for a moment: decades had slipped by, when God led Isaac as faithfully as He had led Abraham. Generations had passed, when God had shown Himself as powerful for Daniel in the lion's den as He had for Abraham.

God was present in power when He spoke creation into being. Thousands of years have passed, but He is still powerfully present today in our lives. When time ceases to exist, God will still be eternal - living beyond time.

In the New Testament, on the other hand, it speaks of God as eternal in terms more traditional to our thinking. The word "eternal", "aion" or "αἰών" in the Greek, describes duration. It is a depiction of something which always was and which lasts unendingly without changing in qualities or abilities.

If God is limited by time, then He must either have come into existence since time began or else He must be changing and eventually cease to be. The God of Jacob is of importance to us only if He is and does the same as He was and did for Israel.

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If God is not eternal, in the sense of duration, then His power to deliver Israel is not a source of encouragement in the struggles of our lives. It would simply be interesting history. It makes a difference in our lives if God is and always will be what He was for Israel and before creation.

God is eternal. When life turns sour, He will be there. When I fail, He will be there, still ready to forgive. When the problems of life sweep over me like a flood, God will be there to be my help as He was to Job. If God is eternal, just think, there is no limit to what we can trust Him to do and be in the crises of our lives!

When God called Gideon, He said, "I will be with you." Hundreds of years later, Jesus sent His disciples into all the world and said, "I am with you always." God has not changed! He is still the same in His power, majesty and mercy as He has always been.

THE PERSONAL GOD

There are a number of names for God which are often read casually. People think of them as simply a way to refer to God. These names do provide us a way to speak of God, but they do more.

These names identify the fact that God is personal. This is a great contrast to the idols served by Israel's neighbors and enemy countries. In this, the names which identify the personal God perform two functions:

The names of God form a contrast with the selfish, impersonal idols of Israel's neighbors.

They are a source of encouragement to Israel, when larger, more powerful neighbors made life nearly impossible for them.

There are several names which identify God as the personal God. Out of this list of names, which identify the personal God, we have chosen a few to discuss.

THE GOD OF ISRAEL

Each nation in that part of the world paid allegiance to their national god. They usually had many other gods, but one received their national attention. For some, it was Baal. For Israel, it was Jehovah. It is not surprising that Jehovah was called "the God of Israel." This name was used at least 461 times. It identified Jehovah as Israel's personal God.

Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says, 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert. Exodus 5:1

The picture is dramatic, but equally traumatic. Moses and Aaron were talking with Pharaoh. This ruler was a deity to the people and nation of Egypt. Moses dared to make a demand upon the god of Egypt in the name of the God of Israel.

Later in the book of Exodus, the author used this name again.

Three times all your men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD (Adonai Jehovah), the God (Elohim) of Israel. Exodus 34:23

After God gave Moses the ten commandments a second time, He also gave him several other instructions. This verse is part of those directives. Observe that God speaks of Himself as the Sovereign LORD (Adonai Jehovah) the God of Israel. The God of Israel has a particular emphasis. In this instance, the use of the name "the God of Israel" focuses attention on God as the one to whom the men of Israel owe their uncompromising allegiance. God is the merciful God who will drive out nations greater in size than Israel because He is the God of Israel.

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

In the opening chapter of I Samuel, the author described an uncomfortable conversation between Eli and Hannah. Eli thought Hannah was drunk. She explained the bitter pain in which she lived. Eli responded:

"Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him." I Samuel 1:17

In this benediction, you can sense the pastoral heart of Eli. He used the name of "the God (Elohim) of Israel" to express the great compassion of God for His people Israel. It is not coincidental that in this name the word for God is "Elohim" - the God of Mercy. The God of Israel understands the pain of childlessness and hears the cry of the abused.

The author of I Samuel used the name, "the God of Israel" in yet another way.

When the men of Ashdod saw what was happening, they said, "The ark of the God of Israel must not stay here with us, because his hand is heavy upon us and upon Dagan our god." I Samuel 5:7

When the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant, they celebrated the victory of Dagon over Jehovah. After the Ark was captured, it was taken, as a trophy of conquest, into the temple of Dagon. The next morning, they discovered that Dagon had fallen face down on the floor before the Ark of the Covenant. The head and hands of the idol were broken off and lying on the threshold. The Philistines also discovered that their people were developing tumors. The Ark was quickly moved from Ashdod to Gath, but with the same results. Many died and others developed tumors. The Ark was moved again.

Prior to this time the Ark was called "the Ark of the Covenant" or "the Ark of God." When the image of Dagon fell and broke before the Ark and the people developed tumors and died, the author began calling the Ark by a different name - "The Ark of the God of Israel."

The author in this passage, used the name "the God of Israel" to assert the power of the God of Israel over Dagon, the god of the Philistines. It presents Elohim - the God of Mercy - as the God above other gods; the God who gives His people power over fierce, threatening neighbors.

David wrote a Psalm which dealt with the frightening experience when Saul sent guards to watch David's house in order to kill him.

O LORD God Almighty, the God of Israel, rouse yourself to punish all the nations; show no mercy to wicked traitors. Psalm 59:5

This Psalm is a cry to God for help when life was threatening. In the Psalm, David claims that they seek his life though he had done nothing wrong. He pleaded with God to come to his aid.

Notice that David used the compound name - Lord God Almighty which we described in chapter 23, as well as "the God of Israel. As we indicated in chapter 23, "Lord God Almighty" is composed of three parts:

- "LORD" - Jehovah - the eternal judge
- "God" - Elohim - the Majestic God of Mercy
- "Almighty" (of hosts) - this is a direct reference to the power of one who commands an irresistible army.

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David's emphasis in his traumatic plea for help is very direct. He pleads with the all powerful God of Justice and Mercy who watches over the faithful to protect them from evil men and to punish the wicked. "The God of Israel" here emphasizes the God who watches over His people and protects them from the abuse of the wicked.

THE LORD YOUR GOD

This name for God was very comforting for Israel, but a source of confusion for their neighbors. Idol worshippers thought of their gods as being possibly concerned for the nation, but having no personal concerns. "The LORD your God" marked a sharp contrast between the God of Israel and the idols of their neighbors.

In almost every instance, "The LORD your God" involves two names for God:

- "Lord" - Jehovah - the Eternal God of Justice
- "God of you" - a form of the word Elohim - the Majestic God of Mercy

This compound name was used in many books of the Old Testament, but it is particularly helpful in the Pentateuch - the first five books of the Old Testament.

When the Egyptians were particularly cruel to the Israelite slaves, God told Moses to speak to Israel on His behalf.

Therefore say to the Israelites: "I am the LORD (Jehovah) and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them and will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. Exodus 6:6, 7

In verse six, God identified himself as "the LORD" - Jehovah - the Eternal God of Justice; the one who could not allow the Egyptians to get away with this injustice. Notice that through Moses, God made several promises:

- Bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians
- Free you from being slaves
- Redeem you with an outstretched arm and mighty acts of judgment
- Take you as my own people
- I will be your God

Only then did He say, "Then you will know that I am the LORD your God." In this, God identified the fact that in this instance, the name "the LORD your God" carried the connotation of the one who is merciful and strong on behalf of His people. It described a relationship of belonging in which we are family; we belong to Him; He takes responsibility for our welfare like a Jewish father.

In Leviticus, the author had a clear understanding of what God meant when He called Himself "the LORD your God."

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves by any creature that moves about on the ground. Leviticus 11:44

In the midst of the dietary laws, this verse stands out. The name "the LORD your God" is inescapably tied to a holy lifestyle. It is a relationship which grows out of mutual commitment in holiness. It is much more than simply saying that He is Israel's God.

THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB

As it happened so often, the names of God formed a positive contrast with the idols worshipped by Israel's neighbors. This name is a good example of such a contrast.

Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God. Exodus 3:6

Moses had seen the bush burning. It was startling! The great ministry to which God called Moses required this kind of affirmation. A burning bush, which was not consumed, was serious affirmation. The question arises, Why does God add to this by speaking of Himself as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? The use of this name highlights at least two things:

- the faithfulness of God - God was faithful to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob.
- The changelessness of God - though these great leaders in Israel were separated by decades, God dealt with one as mercifully as the other.

On at least thirteen occasions, God stressed His faithfulness and changelessness by referring to Himself as "the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob." Another name, "the God of thy father" carries much the same message.

LORD GOD OF THE HEBREWS

This name, though used only five times, was very close to the hearts of the people of Israel. The name includes two of the more common names for God:

- **"Lord"** - Jehovah - the Eternal God of Justice
- **"God"** - Elohim - the Majestic God of Mercy

Some Christians focus on the justice or the mercy of God to the exclusion of the other. This name makes it clear that the justice is as strong as the mercy.

The author of Exodus gives an insight into the meaning of this name for God"

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says:' "Let my people go, so that they may worship me." Exodus 9:1

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The five appearances of this name occur in the book of Exodus. In each instance, God commanded Moses to use this name to identify Him to Pharaoh. He did it!

In this instance, God used the name to identify His desire to protect the Hebrew people and their interests.

There is an irony in this name. God identified Himself as the God of the enslaved Hebrew people.

This may sound strange at first, but it is true. It was God's way of saying, to an arrogant, godless tyrant, that He was the God of these people even when conditions could not have been worse. It was also a way of saying that because He was their God, He would meet their every need.

There is a faithfulness of God in the use of this name. God proved Himself greater than all the gods of the most powerful nation in the world. He identified with the weakest of peoples. When the plagues came, when Israel was delivered, then we could see omnipotence in the glory of His faithfulness.

In a world that is increasingly impersonal; He is "our God;" He is the LORD **our** God. He knows and cares for us personally, individually. I am comforted that He knows me; He even calls me by my nickname - Bill.

EL SHADDAI

THE ALL POWERFUL ALMIGHTY

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD (Jehovah) appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; (El Shaddai) walk before me and be blameless." Genesis 17:1

The Hebrew words which describe "Almighty God" are "El Shaddai." This name is a compound word.

- **God** - "El" (אֱלֹהִים)- comes from the root which means strength which is good; strength which accompanies greatness. It is most often used of God, but it is also used to describe things that are strong - the ram, a tree, a powerful political chief, an oak, the lintel of the door, a door post, a pilaster which strengthens a weaker wall.
- **Almighty** - "Shaddai" - comes from the root word "shawdad" (שָׁדַד). It describes a man who is burly, one who is powerful, a fortress impregnable, one who ravages, a robber band, an oppressor, one who spoils or one who totally lays waste.

In typical Near Eastern style, this word places an emphasis on the idea of strength by using two words which both speak of strength. It uses repetition for purposes of emphasis. One might literally translate this title as The All Powerful Almighty. It is intended to describe the indescribable. It is an attempt to grasp something of the God whose power uniquely has no limits.

In seven Old Testament references and two New Testament references the authors speak of "Almighty God."

Genesis 17:1 God appeared to Abraham when he was 99 years of age. Abraham had been waiting impatiently for the birth of his son and heir for decades. In that context, the author of Genesis wrote,

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD (Jehovah) appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty (El Shaddai); walk before me and be blameless." Genesis 17:1

Immediately following this encounter, God reaffirmed His covenant with Abram and Abram fell on his face in fear lest he view the face of God. There are two expressions of power described in this experience.

- God can give a child to a 100 year old man who has a 90 year old wife.
- God is so frighteningly powerful that Abram falls on his face lest he view the face of this God whose power has no boundaries.

Genesis 28:3 When Jacob deceived Isaac and thus received his brother's blessing, Esau vowed to get even after his father's death. Learning of this, Rebekah tricked Isaac into sending Jacob to Laban to secure a wife. Isaac blessed Jacob before sending him to Laban and he implores **God Almighty** to bless Jacob on this journey. This was his blessing:

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

*May **God Almighty** (El Shaddai) bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples...Genesis 28:3*

Seeking a great blessing for his son Jacob, Isaac appeals to the greatest imaginable expression of God's power to perform the monumental blessing he implores.

Genesis 35:11 After Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, had tricked the men of Shechem, and killed all the people, God told Jacob to go back to Bethel, and Jacob demanded that the members of his family get rid of their foreign gods. They brought Jacob all their idols and the ear rings they wore, an integral part of their idol worship, and Jacob buried them by a tree in Shechem. When he reached Bethel, Jacob built an altar to Jehovah, where his name was changed from Jacob to Israel.

It was at this point that God called Himself "El Shaddai."

*And God said to him, "I am **God Almighty** (El Shaddai); be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body. Genesis 35:11*

God wanted Israel to understand that though it seemed an impossible task that God would give them the land formerly promised to their ancestor Abraham, still it would be done. God spoke of Himself as God Almighty to help Israel see the source of strength that would accomplish this great feat.

When Israel sent his sons to Egypt, he blessed them saying,

*"And may **God Almighty** (El Shaddai) grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you." Genesis 43:14*

Israel's request seemed impossible. It appeared that the agreement between the Egyptian leader and the brothers had been violated by the brothers. Nevertheless, Israel called upon the All Powerful Almighty to do the impossible on their behalf.

When Israel was about to die, he spoke with Joseph, and said,

***God Almighty** (El Shaddai) appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and there he blessed me and said to me, "I am going to make you fruitful and increase your numbers, I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you." Genesis 48:3, 4*

It may not seem like much to us, but to promise that the land would be theirs everlastingly was a monumental task. Everyone wanted the land, no matter whether it was good land or even if it was not their kind of land. For this reason Israel called upon the All Powerful Almighty to perform the miracle He had promised.

The people of Israel had suffered a great deal at the hands of the Egyptians. When they cried to the LORD, He heard them and sent Moses to be their deliverer. Moses was tending the sheep of his father-in-law on the back side of the desert. God got his attention

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by causing a bush to burn, but not be consumed. When Moses saw this, God spoke to him, out of the burning bush, saying,

God (Elohim) also said to Moses, "I am the LORD (Jehovah). I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty (El Shaddai), but by my name the LORD (Jehovah) I did not make myself known to them. Exodus 6:2, 3

"God Almighty" was a picture of God as one whose power had no boundaries. This was exactly what Abraham, Isaac and Jacob needed to see. They needed a God of the impossible to achieve impossible tasks. It was in this light that God revealed Himself to them. The need for Israel in Egypt was different. We tend to see the Exodus as bringing Israel out of Egypt, and it was, but it was more. The Exodus was also a dispersing of divine judgment in a way they had not known before. God was revealing Himself to Moses as Jehovah because this name means the eternal God of justice. We see the Exodus as deliverance for Israel, but God saw the Exodus as deliverance for Israel and justice for Egypt.

The New Testament uses this same name and in much the same light. The apostle John used it when he described the approach of the final battle between good and evil.

They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. Revelation 16:14

When the forces of evil influence kings to participate in their demonic designs, God Almighty will fight against them and defeat them sorely. It is a picture of power bursting all bounds and limitations. The Greek word for Almighty is "παντοκράτωρ." This word was used exclusively for God. It is a compound word taken from these two words:

- "παν" - all
- "κράτος" - literally vigor, dominion, might.

In its compound form it stands for God, the Absolute, Universal Sovereign, the Omnipotent One. When kings gather to use their combined power to serve the evil one, The Absolute, Universal Sovereign of the universe will destroy their combined power!

In John's vision of the rider on the white horse, he describes Jesus in these terms.

- He is called Faithful and True.
- He wears a robe dipped in blood
- His name is "the word of God."

Each of these designations makes it clear that John is referring to Jesus. While speaking of Jesus, John portrays Him as wielding the mighty wrath of God in these words:

Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron septre. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Revelation 19:15, 16

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This is a vivid picture of the awesome omnipotence of God. His wrath is irresistible. The emphasis of this irresistible power is that it accomplishes the will of God against all evil forces.

In the presence of awesome power, we dare to ask how this applies to us. If God is El Shaddai, **then** why should we be surprised when He acts? If our God is El Shaddai, **then** why do we pray for a miracle and show surprise when it happens?

THE LORD ALMIGHTY

The name "LORD Almighty" is found in only one place in the Scriptures. These two words carry significant meaning:

- **LORD** - "kurios" (κύριος) in the Greek, means master, the one whom you obey without question or personal consideration. It is what a slave called his owner.
- **Almighty** - "pantokrator" - (παντοκράτωρ) - means, as we indicated previously, the absolute, universal sovereign of the universe, the omnipotent one.

In this name, Paul speaks of the same universal sovereign, but identifies Him as the LORD, the one to whom we belong. Notice how Paul speaks of the "LORD Almighty:"

"Therefore come from them and be separate," says the LORD. 'Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.' "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters. Says the LORD Almighty." II Corinthians 6:17, 18

Paul quotes from the shocking statement made by Hosea. The prophet said Israel would no longer be called God's people. A time would come, when God would again claim them as His people. Paul also quotes from Isaiah, as a second witness, affirming the same idea. The idea he alluded to was as follows:

I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth. Isaiah 43:6

He said that Israel wanted an all powerful God who could do miraculous things. This all powerful, almighty God was also to be their LORD. He was the one to whom they must belong, the one whom they must obey. That being the case, Paul urged them to purify themselves, as God commanded. He urged them to allow their reverence and awe of the All Powerful God to move them to cleanse their lives and to continually grow in holy living.

Think about this for a moment. Imagine what it would be like to really believe that our God was the All Powerful, Almighty God. This means that we would believe that there was nothing beyond His power or ability. We would expect, that everything that He did in the Old Testament would be just as possible in our lives today. It means that we would expect Him to be almighty and be absolutely shocked if He did not demonstrate that power in all of life. Wouldn't that be fantastic?!

Remember, however, that this limitless God is your master; you are His servant. A servant does not ask why his master told him to do his task. He obeys without question. A servant does not wonder whether this works for his own benefit or for that of his master.

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He just does as he is told. Do you ever do what God asks you to do without asking even one question?

A servant does not consider his life as his own possession. He knows that his master has power over his life and death. It is appropriate for the master to require even his life. Do you, to this extent, think of God as your master?

LORD GOD ALMIGHTY

As we indicated in the previous section on Almighty God, repetition is a form that the Greek and Hebrew languages used to make a strong emphasis. That is true in this case.

There is an added ingredient, however. In this title, the word "LORD" is added to the title "Almighty God." This makes the whole situation very personal and demanding. It is one thing for God to be the Universal Sovereign. It is quite another for this Universal Sovereign to be our LORD. The word "LORD" (κύριος) means owner, master. It is the word by which slaves addressed their owners. This particular title is found only in the writings of the Apostle John in the Revelation.

John described what he saw when he looked inside heaven.

Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stopped saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." Revelation 4:8

This would be a surprise to those who heard it. People associate power with abuse because that has been the almost universal experience. John saw the greatest power in the universe and realized that the living creatures spent day and night affirming both His holiness and His eternal being. These creatures identified the All Powerful Sovereign as the one to whom the saints belong, to whom they offer their unconditional allegiance and for whom they consider no sacrifice too great.

Again, John describes how the 24 elders worship God.

And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying, "We give thanks to you, LORD God Almighty, who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign." Revelation 11:16, 17

What an awesome picture! There are at least two pictures in the scene John has painted for us. This is the picture of worship. The 24 elders are worshipping The Universal Sovereign, the All Powerful Almighty because He has taken His rightful place and has begun to reign throughout the universe. This is no small achievement. John adds "LORD" to the title "Almighty God" as a way of saying, it is one thing to show your great power in ruling over all the kings and nations of the world, but you only become Lord when I see myself as your servant; when my life is available to you without limitation or personal consideration. This is the awesome picture John has painted for us.

John describes another breath-taking scene. The seven angels are about to dispense the seven plagues over the earth. John then tells of those who were victorious over the

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beast and his image and the number of his name. These victorious saints were holding harps and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

Great and marvelous are your deeds, LORD God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O LORD, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy, all nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed. Revelation 15:3b, 4

Who would have more authority to praise the "LORD God Almighty" than those who had been faithful to Him in the midst of persecution that in some instances cost them their lives? Again, it is one thing to affirm the fact that God is the Universal Sovereign, it is altogether different to acclaim Him as "LORD." This is to say that He is our owner, the One who assigns the tasks for our lives, the One for whom we live and to whom we render unconditional allegiance.

In the description of the seven bowls of God's wrath, John paints another picture. He tells of the angel who was in charge of the waters praising the judgment of God. John said:

And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, LORD God Almighty, true and just are your judgments." Revelation 16:7

It is an honor to be able to render judgment. It is an even greater honor to render judgment over all the earth. It is a still greater honor to have the power and authority to carry out these judgments. With this in mind, the angels lauded the judgment of God and the altar responded that the judgments of the LORD God Almighty were just in all their ways.

Near the end of the book of Revelation, John remarks that he did not see a temple in heaven. He then added:

I did not see a temple in the city, because the LORD God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. Revelation 21:22

The title "Lord God Almighty" is a designation of unique power, but it also includes the idea of servanthood. This Universal Sovereign rules over all creation, but He is our LORD, our Master. He is the one to whom I offer unconditional allegiance. He is the one for whom we exist. He is the one whose purposes alone are the priority of His people. Almighty God is Lord.

GOD, GOD OF ISRAEL

This compound name of God is made-up of the following words in the Hebrew:

God - "El" (אֱלֹהִים) - As Indicated in previous chapters, this name means the mighty one, the Almighty.

God - "Elohe" (אֱלֹהֵי) - Elohae is a form of "Elohim." In this form it stresses God's majesty **and** emphasizes His mercy.

"Israel" (יִשְׂרָאֵל) - This word literally means - He will rule as God. It is more commonly translated as having power with God. It is constantly used as a name for the posterity of Jacob.

Genesis 33 contains a good illustration of this compound name.

For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent. There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel. Genesis 33:19, 20

Observe that Jacob bought the land. It was not necessary to buy land if you were just passing through. Jacob wanted the place he presented to God, for a place of worship, to be one that he owned and had the right to give. This is what David talked about when he said,

But the king (David) replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." II Samuel 24:24

This gives us an impression of how Jacob thought about God.

Jacob, of whom the Genesis 33:19 quote speaks, named the altar "El Elohe Israel" which would be understood to mean "the Almighty, The God of majesty and mercy who watches over Israel." He could have called this place "mighty is the God of Israel," but that would have left out two major ideas included in the name - mercy and royalty. Jacob's feelings about what God had done were very deep. He was keenly aware of how the mercy and royal majesty of God had benefited him in his relationship with his brother, Esau. The context of this quotation is important. Jacob, the heel-grabber, had just met his brother Esau and to his amazement survived the encounter. In his eyes, the name he gave this place reflected his understanding, the deep meaning of this experience, for he realized that it took an Almighty God to protect him from Esau. As you may recall from the description of Jacob's life and activities, Esau had many reasons to hate and kill Jacob. Because God had personally been so very merciful to him and to his family, Jacob called the name of the place "El Elohe Israel". It was, therefore, no accident that Jacob built an altar here. It was his way of saying that God was the one who had done this and this awareness compelled Jacob to want to worship and praise Him.

The question arises, why does the author put the two names for God, "El" and "Elohe", together in this name? The name "El" places an emphasis on the quality of omnipotence. It stresses the fact that God is the Almighty. Elohim, on the other hand, stresses the majesty and mercy of God. By placing the two names together, he stresses the fact that God is omnipotent as well as majestic and merciful. It may not seem so to us, but Jacob understood that only a God whose power had no limits, who was greater than any

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and all, could bring about the reconciliation that had just taken place, and that this God was His God. It was a way of giving all the credit to God for this answer to prayer.

If we contemplate the events of our own lives with godly insight, we will soon discern that we have been through experiences where we, too, must concur that only the Almighty, the Majestic God of Mercy could have brought sense and safety out of the dilemma in which we found ourselves, and that this incredible God is our God as well!

EL ROI

*She gave this name to the LORD, who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me." For she said, "I have now seen the one who sees me."
Genesis 16:13*

In the midst of the dilemma in which she found herself, Hagar got a glimpse of God that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. As Hagar spoke with the angel, she discovered something about God that was meaningful. In her distress of being pregnant, all alone and helpless in the wilderness, Hagar realized that God was present and He could see every detail of the tragedy of her life. Thus she identified God as "El Roi."

The name "El Roi" is another compound Hebrew word.

- **God** - "El" (אֱלֹהִים) - means to be strong, almighty, a mighty one. It also was used to describe a ram, an oak or other strong tree, an oak post. The emphasis was on undaunted strength.
- **sees** - "Roi" (רֹאִי) - means sight, a gazing stock, someone to point at in mockery, to look to see. It comes from the root "roah" which means to perceive intensely, to show, to spy out, to stare, to see in a vision.

When they had been in the land for ten years, Abram and Sarai had not yet had a child. It was now required that one of three things take place:

- Sarai had to have a baby.
- Sarai would have to give her servant girl, Hagar, to Abram to bear a child on Sarai's behalf.
- Abram should otherwise divorce Sarai because she had not borne him a child in ten years.

Sarai gave Hagar to Abram and she conceived a child.

In her arrogant feeling of superiority over Sarai, Hagar was wrong. One can understand the feelings of Hagar, but these feelings are nevertheless wrong.

Sarai, on the other hand was wrong in her anger and jealousy shown to Hagar. The situation was so bad that Hagar chose the probability of dying in the desert or getting caught as a run-away slave in preference to continued abuse by Sarai, her mistress.

As Hagar sat by the spring in the desert, the angel of the LORD spoke to her. Hagar heard the unwelcome words of the angel directing her to go back to the mistress who had abused her. Imagine how she felt! God was saying, that when life is that difficult, you do not solve the problem by escape. You solve it by going through the difficulty, knowing that God sees and understands your pain.

Hagar expressed her discovery of God by giving Him a descriptive name - "El Roi." He is the God who searches our painful experiences with penetrating perception. "El Roi" is the God who stares intensely into the caldron of our tears so that we can sense a solution in His presence and not in our escape.

There is irony in the observation by Hagar. She came from Egypt where they worshipped a whole pantheon of idols. These idols had eyes, but they could not see. Most of them had ears, but they could not hear. This slave, who had grown up in a pagan

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culture, had spent time in the household of one who was faithful to Jehovah no matter what happened to him. Now, in her dilemma, she points out that though she was from a pagan background, the God of Israel could see her and do something about the dilemma of her life. Jehovah could hear her cries for help, whereas the local deities, made of stone or wood, could not hear, could do nothing about her situation.

When life seems to be more pain than pleasure, when everything that could go wrong already has, remember that the name of God is "El Roi," the Almighty, Eternal God who sees you and your dilemma. He will be your strength.

MIGHTY GOD

There are several different forms of this name. We will deal with each one separately.

MIGHTY ALMIGHTY GOD

The name "Mighty Almighty God" is "El Gibbor" (אֱלֹהִים גִּבּוֹר). This Hebrew word "mighty" (גִּבּוֹר) means to rise, to raise or restore. It has to do with being unusually strong. It was sometimes used to describe the strengthening of cords by plaiting them together. The word was later used to describe noblemen who had the privilege of bearing arms for the king. This was a status symbol of power. It was not uncommon, in that day, to depict God as a mighty warrior. The use of this word assumes great power, but it also assumes important traits of character such as wisdom, understanding and wise counsel.

The name "El" (אֱלֹהִים) means Almighty God. It focuses upon the divine quality of strength. It is also used to convey the idea of "power" or "fear."

As happens so often in Greek and Hebrew, repetition is used to give emphasis to one's idea. In the name "El Gibbor" that is exactly what happened. The name would literally mean "the Powerful Almighty God."

The wall of Jerusalem was completely restored. Part of the dedication was a reading of the Law and a time of intense confession of sins. The conclusion of the prayer of dedication included these words:

Now therefore, O our God (Elohim), the great, mighty (Gibbor) and awesome God (El), who keeps his covenant of love, do not let all this hardship seem trifling in your eyes - the hardship that has come upon us, upon our kings and leaders. Nehemiah 9:32

Having confessed their sin and covenanted to be faithful servants of God, the Levites extolled the greatness of God using the name "Almighty God", "El gibbor" (אֱלֹהִים גִּבּוֹר). The enemies of Israel were powerful and worked hard to keep these Israelites from completing the wall. The Powerful or Mighty, Almighty God, however, was stronger than the enemy nations. The wall was completed and the people of Israel were again established in the land.

Isaiah also reflected something of the same idea.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, (El Gibbor) Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

This is a prophecy concerning the coming Messiah. There are a number of facts about the Messiah in this verse, but our concern here has to do with the "Mighty Almighty God."

The use of the words "El" and "gibbor" is a way to highlight the idea of unique power and then doubly emphasizing it by using a second word with essentially the same meaning.

Jeremiah used this special name in a beautiful way.

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*"Ah, **Sovereign LORD**, (Adonai Jehovah) you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. You show love to thousands, but bring punishment for the fathers' sins into the laps of their children after them. O Great (gadowl) and Powerful (gibbor) God (El), whose name is the Lord Almighty (Jehovah of Hosts)." Jeremiah 32:17, 18*

Jeremiah was describing just how mighty God is. In this description he used three different words which all focus on greatness.

Mighty God - "El" (אֱלֹהִים) refers to "The Almighty God." It is often translated "Sovereign."

Almighty - "Gibbor" (גִּבּוֹר) means powerful warrior, mighty, valiant. It is the word used in Judges 6:12, when the angel of the Lord called Gideon "mighty warrior."

"Gadowl" (גָּדוֹל) means to twist, to magnify, to be great. A strand may not be very strong. If you twist that strand, however, it will become several times stronger than it was.

To the Jewish mind, Jeremiah stated and emphasized it twice that God was the Mighty, Almighty, Valiant God. Notice that the words "gibbor" and "gadowl" both mean "great" or "mighty." They are not exactly the same, however. "Gadowl" is the stronger of the two words. To have a strong rope, two, three or more strands must be twisted. This idea is reflected in the compound word Jeremiah used. It is a triple stress on the idea of "mighty." One might say it in this way, "the Mighty, Almighty, Great Sovereign."

LORD GOD, GREAT AND AWESOME GOD

Combining names for greater emphasis was often used in the Old Testament. The author of Deuteronomy used a different combination for "Mighty Lord." Its composition is as follows:

Mighty God - "El" (אֱלֹהִים) means Almighty. It is often translated "Sovereign."

Lord - "Jehovah" (יְהוָה) - This name focuses on the eternal God of justice. It is usually translated "Lord." It is dealt with in more detail in chapter six of this book.

God - "Elohim" (אֱלֹהִים) - This name is usually translated "God." It stresses the powerful majesty of God and is often used in situations involving the mercy of God. This name is dealt with in chapter one.

Almighty - "Gadowl" (גָּדוֹל) means to twist, to magnify, to be great.

As Israel was preparing to enter into the promised land, Moses gave his farewell address. He talked with the people of Israel about driving out the pagan nations that inhabited the land.

*Do not be terrified of them, for the LORD (Jehovah) your God (Elohim), who is among you, is a great (gadowl) and awesome God (El).
Deuteronomy 7:21*

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Notice the way Moses speaks of God in this verse. There are three different names for God - Jehovah, Elohim and El - each suggesting a different level of "Mighty." The Hebrew word order, at the end of the sentence, is even more powerful, "... Who is among you, God (El) great and awesome."

MIGHTY, MIGHTY GOD

As we said before, words, which have similar meanings, when used together, are usually a way of placing emphasis on the idea in question. The use of Almighty (El), Jehovah and Elohim is a prime example of such an emphasis.

Another example was used by Elihu, who tried to help Job understand more about the almighty power of God. He did it with these words:

God (El) is mighty (cabbivr), but does not despise men; he is mighty (cabbivr), and firm in his purpose. Job 36:5

Mighty God - "El" (אֱלֹהִים) This name is usually translated "Almighty," as mentioned before.

Mighty - "Kabbir" (קַבִּיר) comes from the root (קָבַר) "kabar" which means to plait together, to augment in number or quantity, to accumulate. "Kabbir" is often translated "Mighty." It was sometimes used to describe the way a vast army swoops effortlessly down on a small garrison of defenders.

Elihu used this word to try to correct Job's image of who God is and how He works.

God (El) is mighty (kabbir), but he does not despise men; he is mighty, and firm in his purpose. He does not keep the wicked alive, but he gives the afflicted their rights. Job 36:5,6

Elihu's statement is graphic. The Almighty is mighty like a plaited rope. Just as it is many times stronger than a hand-full of single strands, so the Almighty is far stronger than any man or idol or any combination of them. Having said this, Elihu goes on to say that despite his unequalled power, God is fair and compassionate. Elihu was dealing with Job's catastrophic condition. He didn't want Job to blame God for it, but felt that Job, from Elihu's perspective, should admit his fault and repent.

MIGHTY LORD

In the Hebrew, this specific name for God is "LORD" "Jehovah" (יהוה). It was discussed in chapter six. This most personal name for God focuses attention on His eternity and is often used in situations involving judgment.

The word "Mighty", "gibbor" (גִּבּוֹר), as we previously indicated, is an expression of unusual strength.

The Psalmist David understood the meaning of this name and used it well:

Who is this king of glory? The LORD (Jehovah) strong and mighty, the LORD (Jehovah) mighty in battle. Psalm 24:8

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In this Psalm, David described the greatness of Jehovah. It is thought by some scholars that David wrote it to be sung as the Ark of the Covenant was entering the City of David on its trip from the home of Obed-Edom.

To my knowledge, this is the only occurrence of this name in the Old Testament. David was so intent on praising God in a special way that he had to use a new name. Look at Psalm 24:8 again. What is added to the meaning of the question by the addition of the word "mighty" (גִּבּוֹר)? David described God as a king. Death is one experience kings share with the rest of us. This king, Jehovah, was not only powerful, He was eternal. Death will never be a part of His experience. He is the judge of all kings as well as all people. Using the word "mighty," David added a whole new dimension to royalty - eternity.

THE LORD YOUR MIGHTY GOD

This name, like several others, is composed of two divine names - "Jehovah" and Elohim." The name "Elohim" is described in chapter one and "Jehovah" in chapter six. Used together, they stress the following things about God:

- God is majestic and merciful - "Elohim"
- God is the eternal judge - "Jehovah"
- Mighty - God is a mighty warrior - "gibbor"

Zephaniah understood this name well when he said,

The LORD (Jehovah) your God (Elohim) is with you, he is mighty (Gibbor) to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing. Zephaniah 3:17

This statement, though true, would startle the people of that day. They had experience with kings. The more powerful the king, the more devastating and highhanded was his treatment of his subjects. Zephaniah's statement is more a picture of a loving father than a merciless despot, their merciful judge would be with them in their devastating experiences. God, the Mighty One, will save them. Though He is powerful, He will take great delight in His people. The Merciful Sovereign will comfort them in love and He will be thrilled with their presence.

Zephaniah said that their merciful judge would be with them in their devastating experiences. God the mighty one would save them. The merciful sovereign will comfort them in love and He will be thrilled with their presence.

MIGHTY LORD OF JACOB

A fourth compound name appears four times in Psalms and Isaiah. In each instance the structure is the same:

LORD - "Jehovah" - (יהוה) - the eternal God of justice

Mighty - "Abbiyr" - (גִּבּוֹר) - This word for "mighty" differs from the ones previously described. It comes from the root "Abaer" (אָבֵר), and was originally used to describe wild animals that symbolize great power and might - the bull, a fierce

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stallion and a powerful bird like an eagle. It was later used to describe a chief, a valiant one, a mighty one.

of Jacob - "yakov" - (יָקוֹב) - this phrase lends identity to the name. This is the God who is mighty on behalf of "Jacob" - the people of Israel.

In the Songs of Ascent, probably written by David, there is a beautiful refrain in which the Psalmist uses the compound divine name, "the Mighty LORD of Jacob."

O LORD (Jehovah), remember David and all the hardships he endured. He swore an oath to the LORD (Jehovah) and made a vow to the mighty one (abbiyr) of Jacob. Psalm 132:1, 2

The Psalmist made a declaration of his commitment to Jehovah by swearing an oath to Jehovah, "the Mighty one of Jacob", that he would find a place to worship Him. What is the difference between "The Mighty One" and "The Mighty One of Jacob"? Both are pictures of our God. "The Mighty One of Jacob", however, has the additional thought of a special, a personal relationship He shares with the people of Israel.

David in the above Psalm, vowed to establish a long-overdue place of worship for "The Mighty Jehovah" who had this special relationship with His people Israel. It is a picture of intense power which can be used on behalf of this special relationship with Israel.

The prophet Isaiah also understood this intimate relationship of power. Speaking of the glory of Zion, he said,

You will drink the milk of nations and be nursed at royal breasts. Then you will know that I, the LORD (Jehovah), am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One (abbiyr) of Jacob. Isaiah 60:16

Isaiah described the intensity of God's mighty power by saying that He will cause nations to deal favorably with the people of Israel. It would be a shock for these people to have other nations treat them kindly. Their land for centuries had been the battleground of nations; their people the slaves of one nation after another.

There are many **seeming** paradoxes which have to do with God. An all-powerful God who deals in concern and compassion **seems** like a paradox. People today are fond of saying, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." For people in power, that may true, but not for God. He is Almighty, but He is as compassionate as He is powerful.

All four of these names - "Almighty God," "Mighty LORD," "The LORD your Mighty God" and "The Mighty God of Jacob" use the same word for "Mighty." All four emphasize the power of God. There is, however, a difference in their emphases:

- "Mighty God" emphasizes the unique **power** of God.
- "Mighty LORD" adds the ingredient of **eternal judge** to the idea of mighty warrior.
- "The LORD Your Mighty God" adds still another ingredient: the Almighty God is a **merciful**, eternal judge.
- "The Mighty God of Jacob" stresses a **relationship of compassion** that God sustains with the people whom He chose to be a light to the nations.

BEHOLD THE BRIGHTNESS

In this chapter, we have used several words which are all translated "mighty." We need to relate these words to each other. The following list places these words in the order of their strength - the strongest one last:

Gibbor - A nobleman defending the king

Kabbir - To plait together, to augment

Gadowl - To twist to strengthen

Abbiyr - symbol of wild animal strength

In each of the many variations of this idea, the primary focus is the mighty power of our God. If God is not more powerful than we are, then He can not help us in the dilemmas of life. If, on the other hand, God were very powerful, but not compassionate, then we can not trust Him, He would be of no benefit to us at all. We need a God who is both powerful and compassionate. As we discovered repeatedly, God is absolutely powerful for every possible need, but loving and compassionate as well.

In recent decades, the church has been dubbed "the sleeping giant." This is not so much from inertia as it is from lack of conviction. The people listed in Hebrews eleven lived in times at least as difficult as ours. The difference is that they were convinced of the power of God; they staked their lives and all they possessed on the certainty that God was greater than any empire. They would have been shocked if God had not done the impossible.

Think, for a moment, about the traumas of life. If God is mighty, and He is, then why are we so fearful?

THE MOST HIGH

This compound name for God appears in five different forms:

- Almighty Most High - using the names "El" and "Elyon"
- God Most High - using the name "Elohim Elyon"
- Jehovah Most High - using the name "Jehovah Elyon"
- Most High - using the name "Elyon"
- LORD God Most High - using the names "Jehovah El Elyon"

We will consider the names separately.

THE ALMIGHTY MOST HIGH

This name for God brings together two words which are very powerful.

Almighty - "El" - (אֱלֹהִים) means strength, one who is mighty, the Almighty one, to be very strong. It is sometimes used to describe any deity. The emphasis in this name is that of overpowering strength.

Most High - "Elyon" - (עֵלְיוֹן) - means the Supreme God, the one elevated above all, the lofty one. The emphasis here is on God's lofty, exalted, unique position in the universe.

These words are translated "God Most High" in the New International Version, but the Hebrew text refers to it as "Almighty Most High." Using the two names for God together, one might translate it "The Almighty Supreme God."

Melchizadek understood this concept very well. When Abram returned in victory, Melchizadek blessed him:

"Blessed be Abram by God Most High (El Elyon), Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High (El Elyon), who delivered your enemies into your hand." Genesis 14:18-20

Melchizadek cited two examples of the almighty power of the Most High:

- He created the heavens and the earth.
- He delivered Abram from a far more powerful army of his enemies.

Both of these tasks were beyond the abilities of Abram and his little army. The author emphasized the unique power of the Almighty Supreme God.

Psalm 107 is probably the work of king David. In it, he spoke of the return of the redeemed to their own land when the Almighty Supreme God brought them back and forgave them.

For they had rebelled against the words of God (El) and despised the counsel of the Most High (Elyon). Psalm 107:11

Returning slaves to their homeland without the use of force was more than impossible. That just did not happen. The "Almighty Most High," "El Elyon," however, promised to return them to the land He had given them.

GOD MOST HIGH

This name also brings together two powerful names for God:

- **God** - "Elohim" - (אֱלֹהִים) - This name focuses upon the majesty of the God of Mercy. A more detailed description is provided in chapter one.
- **Most High** - "Elyon" - (עֶלְיוֹן) - This word means "supreme God" and is often translated "most high."

In this name, we are dealing with an emphasis on the mercy and majesty of God, rather than just raw power. In Psalm 78, Asaph describes the encounter between God and Pharaoh when Moses had been commanded to bring Israel out of Egypt. Having described how He had plagued the land and the people, God said,

But they put God (Elohim) to the test and rebelled against the Most High (Elyon); they did not keep his statutes. Psalm 78:56

This verse uses the name "Elohim" which stresses the mercy of God, and this is an excellent example of it. The people were sinning, but still God was bringing them out of the tragic bondage of Egypt that had nearly destroyed them as a nation.

When David was hiding from Saul in the cave, He realized just what his God was like. Out of that experience he wrote these words.

I cry out to God Most High (Elohim elyon), to God (El) who fulfills his purpose for me. Psalm 57:2

Though David had not been flawless in his devotion, still God preserved him and helped him to escape the power of Saul. This is precisely what David was thinking about when he used the name "Elohim Elyon," God Most High.

When Nebuchadnezzar threw the three Jewish men into the flames because they would not bow down to his image, he did not know what the consequences of such an action might be. This is how the author described the scene.

Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God (Elohim Elyon), Come out! Come here!" Daniel 3:26

It was not an idle choice that Nebuchadnezzar made when he called these three men "servants of the Most High God." This king was the most powerful man in the world at that time and he was accustomed to having his way. There were three men who chose differently, not out of defiance, but because they served God Most High who was much more powerful than any king. Nebuchadnezzar could have chosen to call the men "servants of the "Almighty Most High." That, however, would have stressed raw power, whereas "God Most High" stresses the Majestic God of Mercy even more than the power. That is particularly appropriate in this situation.

JEHOVAH MOST HIGH

Again, this name is a compound name for God in the Hebrew. It is made up of two other names for God:

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Lord - "Jehovah" (יהוה) - This most common name for God is described in greater detail in an earlier chapter. In most instances, it is used to identify the eternal God. It is often used in situations where judgment is involved.

"Most High" - "Elyon" (עליון) - Again, this name means "Supreme God" and is often translated "Most High."

The need to use this name as opposed to another represents a need to stress the fact that God is eternal, not just powerful. It also includes a focus on the fact that God judges evil wherever it may be found.

The Benjamites were a source of tension over many decades. This was particularly true of Cush and his son Nimrod. David writes of them in Psalm seven. It is a Psalm which describes difficult times, but it is reported in the midst of praise. David concludes the Psalm with these words:

*I will give thanks to the LORD (Jehovah) because of his righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the LORD (Jehovah) Most High (Elyon).
Psalm 7:17*

In the hardships of life, David knew that Jehovah is eternal, He is the one who judges evil. Thus the Psalmist could sing praise to Jehovah Most High.

Moses also understood this name for God. He wrote, about Jehovah Most High, in Psalm 91.

If you make the Most High (Elyon) your dwelling - even the LORD (Jehovah), who is my refuge - then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. Psalm 91:9, 10

Moses was well versed in the joys, sorrows and dangers of living in a tent. He rejoiced as he spoke of the fact that if the Most High (Elyon), even the LORD (Jehovah) is your tent, the place where you live, then no harm or disaster will come to you. He spoke of the Most High first because he was placing an emphasis on the royal power of God. Moses added the name LORD, in good Hebrew fashion, to strengthen the statement and add the emphasis of the fact that Jehovah is eternal, He is the God who judges the evil of the world.

Again, the Sons of Korah wrote a Psalm in which this name was used. In the nine short verses of this Psalm, they described a picture of praise for what God, as king, did for His people among the nations.

Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God (Elohim) with cries of joy. How awesome is the LORD (Jehovah) Most High (Elyon), the great King over all the earth! Psalm 47:1, 2

In these two verses, the Sons of Korah make some strong, moving statements about God. They speak of God as "Elohim." This name stresses the majesty of the God of Mercy. In the midst of the evil done by the nations, God will protect and defend. Thus the Psalmists can urge the nations to clap their hands, to rejoice.

The Psalmists could also say that Jehovah Most High is a source of awe and worship because of His great power and concern for His people. In the same two verses, the authors use the name "king" to describe Jehovah Most High. A king, of course, is one

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who has great power and is supposed to use it on behalf of his people. This is exactly what God has done. For this, the Sons of Koreh render their praise and worship.

MOST HIGH

This name for God stands all by itself. It is not strengthened by the addition of any other name.

Most High - "Elyon" - (עֲלִיּוֹן) - This word is translated "Most High". It describes the Supreme God. There is a royal element in the use of this word and its use is not accidental. Every king, when he sat upon his throne, was elevated high above others in the room. The greater the king, the greater the height of the king above his people. To speak of God as Most High is to say that He is a greater king than any regent in the world.

The word "Elyon", all by itself, is found only in Lamentation and Daniel. Jeremiah used this word well when he said, in Lamentations,

*To deny a man his rights before the Most High (Elyon), to deprive a man of justice-would not the LORD (Adonai) see such things?
Lamentations 3:35, 36*

Again Jeremiah said,

Is it not from the mouth of the Most High (Elyon) that both calamities and good things come? Lamentations 3:38

In both of these quotations, Solomon was trying to stress the royal power of God as He rules over His people in love, even when the people turn away from Him. Both scenes are judicial in nature.

Daniel used this name at least three times in chapter seven. On one occasion, he used the name in connection with the name "Ancient of Days." Just the name, "Ancient of Days" suggests long duration, but it is more than that. Daniel, the only Biblical author whose writings contain this name, uses it to identify a ruler over all the world. The use of "Ancient of Days" and "Most High" together adds the idea of supreme rulership to that of longevity.

Until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High (Elyon), and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. Daniel 7:22

In this quotation, "the Most High" (Elyon) is pictured as a ruler who rules in righteousness. His people (saints) were attacked by the beast (symbol of evil presence), but the ruler, God, (Ancient of Days), pronounced judgment in their favor. This was highly unusual. Not only was the judgment in their favor, but they now possessed the entire kingdom. These saints are again attacked by the forces of evil, in Daniel 7:25.

There is also a triumphal scene for the saints in this chapter.

Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High

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(Elyon). His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him. Daniel 7:27

What a beautiful prophecy! The people of the Most High will receive all the kingdoms under heaven. That is unimaginable power which has never been attained by any ruler in history. Think of how powerful the Most High is! All kingdoms dwindle and fail before Him. His kingdom will never fail.

LORD GOD MOST HIGH

This name, in the Hebrew, is made up of three different names for God.

- **LORD** - "Jehovah" (יהוה) - The name Jehovah focuses on the eternal nature of God and the ministry of judgment which He performs.
- **God** - "El" (אל) - Again, this name for God means "the Supreme God," the one elevated above all others, the lofty one. The emphasis is on God's exalted, lofty position in the universe. It is usually translated "God."
- **Most High** - "Elyon" (עליון) - This name also was described earlier. It is sufficient to say here that it has royal connotations which grow out of the idea of great power symbolized by the fact that He is higher than any other. He is sovereign and supreme.

This name which places primary emphasis on the eternal nature of God and upon His ministry of compassionate judging, is found in Genesis 14. Abram had gone to battle against the eastern kings in order to rescue his nephew, Lot. When Abram returned in victory, he was met by two contrasting kings - Melchizadek who blessed him and the king of Sodom who had his hand out trying to get back the people that Abram had rescued. In this tense setting, Abram used the name LORD God Most High.

But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD (Jehovah), God (El), Most High (Elyon), Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, 'I made Abram rich.'" Genesis 14:22, 23

Abram's words were strong, but he was clear that He was dealing with the greatest power in the universe. The addition of several words, such as "El" and "Elyon", which indicate strength, is a common way to emphasize just how mighty God really is.

This is a very important message about God in our time. Many Christians have an impression that there are a host of things they can not do. We need a very clear vision of just how powerful God really is. We need a deep, strong understanding of the Most High. We must plan with the fullest expectation that the power of God will make the impossible common.

JEALOUS GOD

Jealousy is a trait with which we are most uncomfortable. In healthy marriages, both partners are most careful that they would do nothing to give their partner even the slightest reason for jealousy. A jealous spouse can make life most miserable for all concerned. We think of jealousy as a negative quality.

Think of what happens the first time people take seriously the statement about God - He is a "Jealous God"! The Scriptures treat jealousy as a flaw, a sin. Nevertheless, this is a name ascribed to God in the Old Testament.

First we need to examine the meaning of the word "jealous":

"Jealous" - Every use of this word as a name for God comes from the root word (סָנַן) "qana". It means envious, in a bad sense, to provoke to jealousy. It also means to be very zealous over, it is a very strong emotion. It describes the feeling of Rachel, (Genesis 30:1) when she was barren, while Leah gave birth to four sons.

"Qana" - zeal or jealousy, has many expressions. Leonard Coppes, in *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, gives a helpful insight. He identified "envy" as zeal for another's property. On the other hand, "jealousy" is zeal for one's own property. In the best sense, then, it is appropriate to call God by the name "Jealous." It appears that Jesus expressed something of this when He said,

While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. John 17:12

As a loving husband is very protective, in a good sense, of the affection of his wife, so Jesus was protective of the devotion of those who loved Him.

Again, as a loving husband or wife is devastated by the unfaithfulness of his/her mate, so God is deeply offended by the idolatry, the spiritual adultery of His people.

God is called by the name "jealous" seven times in the Old Testament. We will look carefully at each of these passages.

In the reciting of the commandment about having no idols, God spoke of Himself in these words:

You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD (Jehovah) your God (Elohim), am a jealous God (El), punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to thousands who love me and keep my commandments. Exodus 20:5, 6

God revealed something of Himself in this emotion packed statement. All ten commandments were vital directives for God's people. This instruction for worship, however, affects every facet of our lives. Notice that the name "Jealous God," in this instance, uses the name "El," which stresses His great power. God could have used the name "Elohim" and stressed His mercy. He wanted to stress His power which emphasizes just how important it is to obey the command to worship no other god. In this great command, God identifies Himself by four names:

- Jehovah - the eternal judge

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- Elohim - the majestic God of mercy
- El - the almighty, all powerful God
- Jealous - the God who has immense zeal for the affectionate relationship with those who love and worship Him.

Review the ten commandments, as listed in Exodus 20:1-17. Notice how these commands include, or do not include, the name(s) of God:

7 - include no name for God

2 - include two names for God - Jehovah, Elohim

1 - includes four names for God - Jehovah, Elohim, El and Jealous.

The use of four specific names, in this law, suggests just how important this particular law was in the eyes of God. As we indicated earlier, a more specific way to translate this verse might be:

The LORD (Jehovah - the eternal judge) your God (Elohim - the majestic God of mercy) is a jealous (one who is zealous for the affection of His people) God (El - the Almighty one.) Exodus 20:5a

This name also appears later in the book of Exodus:

Do not worship any other God (El) for the Lord (Jehovah) whose name is jealous, is a jealous God (El qana). Exodus 34:14

When Moses returned from Mount Sinai and found Israel involved in idolatrous worship, he broke the two tablets of the law to symbolize their broken covenant. In Exodus 34, God gave Moses the second set of tablets. The former covenant was broken because of a graven image Aaron gave the people. Now, as God reiterates this specific law, He used four names for Himself. He stressed the fact that He was jealous, zealous over the affections of Israel, His spiritual wife.

The name "jealous" was also used in Deuteronomy. Moses said,

For the LORD (Jehovah) your God (Elohim) is a consuming fire, a jealous God (El). Deuteronomy 4:24

Moses reminded Israel that God was angry with him because of them. Now, as Israel was about to cross the Jordan into Canaan, he would have to remain in the mountains and die there. Moses used this not as a basis of complaint, but as a reminder to take their relationships with God quite seriously.

In the verse previously quoted, Moses identified God as a "consuming fire" - one who would totally destroy the disobedient, but would reach out in love to those who obey Him.

In Deuteronomy, chapter five, Moses reviewed the ten commandments. He said:

You shall not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD (Jehovah) your God (Elohim) am a jealous God (El), punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to thousands who love me and keep my commandments. Deuteronomy 5:9, 10

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In this verse, which deals with the worship of idols, Moses described a positive and negative statement about God's actions. Both of these statements support the idea of "zealous" as a description of a "Jealous God." God is zealous, intensely concerned for the love of His people. On the opposite side, God is intensely disappointed over the disaffection of those who disobey Him and serve idols.

A similar ascertainment is found in Deuteronomy chapter six.

For the LORD (Jehovah) your God (Elohim) is a jealous God (El) and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land. Deuteronomy 6:15

Moses warned Israel not to worship the gods of the people among whom they lived. The reason he used for his warning was that God (El - the powerful almighty) was zealous over the affections of His people.

Joshua gives a graphic picture of the same situation to which Moses spoke.

Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD (Jehovah). He is a holy God (Elohim); he is a jealous God (El). He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. If you forsake the LORD (Jehovah) and serve foreign gods (elohim), he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you." Joshua 24:19, 20.

Joshua was giving his farewell address to Israel before he died. His distress was clear. God delivered them from Egypt and protected them for more than 40 years on the return. Still Israel was unwilling to obey God and refrain from idol worship. This is yet another picture of God showing zeal over the affection of His people who had strayed from Him.

The prophet Nahum also spoke of God as a "jealous God."

'The LORD (Jehovah) is a jealous and avenging God (El); the Lord (Jehovah) takes vengeance and is filled with wrath. Nahum 1:2

Unlike the other prophets who prophesied against Israel or Judah, Nahum fiercely announced the devastating destruction of Ninevah in Assyria. This capital city of sin had not only thrived on evil deeds, they had made life intolerable for Israel for ages.

God was angry over the sins of these Gentile idolaters. He was as zealous over their affection as He was over Israel's.

There are some observations that should be made here:

- In each of these seven passages which include this name, the name "El" -the Almighty God - is the only name that was used with the word "jealous;" this in spite of the fact that we are dealing with at least three authors. The emphasis of this observation is that God's zeal was as great as His power.
- In each of the seven passages, the name "jealous God" was used in situations in which God was yearning intensely for the affection of His people who should have demonstrated their affection for Him, but did not.

People tend to focus on God's wrath and judgment and overlook examples of His love and mercy. One of the strong emphases of this particular name is that God's jealousy, His zeal is in fact a longing for our affections.

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Many people are afraid of God because of their sin. The name "jealous God" has a message for us. His zeal for our affection is produced by His love, not His anger. If that is true, think about what this means concerning the dangers in our lives?

THE LIVING GOD

In English, this divine name is "the Living God." In Hebrew, however, it is the reverse, "God the Living." The name appears in both the Old and New Testaments.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

The appearances of this name in the Old Testament take two different forms.

- El Chayim - "אֱלֹהֵי חַיִּים"
- Elohim Chayim - "אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים"

EL CHAYIM

There are three places in the Old Testament where the name "El Chayim" appears. The name is made up of these words:

God - "El" - (אֱלֹהִים) - This is a form of "ayil" (אֵיל), which means strength, a political chief. It was also used to identify things that are very strong - a ram, a pilaster, an oak or other strong tree, an oak post.

The Living - "Chayim" - which comes from the root "חַיָּה" or "chayah" meaning to live, to revive, to quicken, to be whole, to save.

The emphasis in this name is on the great strength and power of God. There is an emphasis on the quality of "living," but it is subordinate to the idea of power and authority.

As Joshua prepared to take Israel into the promised land, he called all Israel together to talk with them about the impending battle. This was a very tense time for God's people.

*This is how you will know that the **living God (El chayim)** is among you, and he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. Joshua 3:10*

The armies that Israel was to drive out were imposing powers. This was a frightening task to say the least. Joshua offered them three messages of encouragement:

First, the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God's covenant presence with them, will go before them into the land.

Secondly, when the priests, carrying the Ark, step into the water, the waters will back up. This is a sign of God's power and help for Israel. It is also a reminder of how God stopped the waters of the Red Sea.

Thirdly, it is the **living** God who will drive the people from the land. Everyone knew that the people in the land served idols, gods of wood and stone. It was consoling for Israel to know they served "the Living God."

The Sons of Korah also wrote of "the Living God."

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God (Elohim). My soul thirsts for God (Elohim), for the living God (El). When can I go and meet with God (Elohim)? Psalm 42:1, 2

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At a time when tears and sorrow were common, the Psalmist had a deep need, an intense yearning for God.

Those who afflicted Israel, those who ridiculed the Psalmist as he worshipped, were servants of idols. The Psalmist took comfort in the fact that the powerful God he served was alive.

Again, the Psalmist, from among the Sons of Korah, sang about the powerful, living God.

*How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD (Jehovah) Almighty (Sabaoth)!
My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the LORD (Jehovah); my heart
and my flesh cry out for **the living God (El)**. Psalm 84:2*

In a Psalm which repeatedly refers to the "LORD Almighty," the Psalmist also refers to "The Living God." The Psalmist sings of his deep longing for the temple, in order to be near the Living God. In a situation of intense danger, he wanted to be close to God, who is alive. Notice that the name for "God" in "the Living God" is "El." This stresses power, an important ingredient in dangerous times and events. This can also be a reference to the living God who saves. This idea of saving is also present in the meaning of the word "living."

ELOHIM CHAYIM

God - "Elohim" (אֱלֹהִים) - The name, as described in previous chapters, is a description of deity, with reference to the Supreme God. It was written in the plural form as a plural of awe or respect. My wife grew up in Germany. Whenever they spoke to an older person, they were required to use the plural form in order to show their respect.

The living - "Chayim" (חַיִּים) - As we previously indicated, this name focuses attention on the quality of living.

As Moses prepared to die and pass on the leadership to Joshua, he gave a farewell address to the people of Israel. We call that message the book of Deuteronomy. Having recited again the ten commandments, which God gave at Sinai, Moses described the conditions which surrounded that announcement.

*For what mortal man has ever heard the voice of the living God (Elohim)
speaking out of fire, as we have, and survived? Deuteronomy 5:26*

Moses reminded them of the powerful presence of God in Mount Sinai. The divine presence was so great, Israel was frightened. They requested that Moses go near and listen and then tell them what God had said.

David could not understand why the army of Israel trembled at the voice of Goliath.

*David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man
who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this
uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of **the living God**?
I Samuel 17:26*

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David knew the power of God. He considered the mockery of Goliath to be an insult to God and he determined to do something about it.

Hezekiah was deeply concerned about the speedy advance of the Assyrians toward Jerusalem. The Holy City did not have an adequate water source within the city. Hezekiah worked hard to correct that situation. He sought guidance through the Prophet Isaiah. Hezekiah went to the temple to pray.

*Give ear, O LORD (Jehovah), and hear; open your eyes, O LORD (Jehovah), and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to insult **the living God (Elohim)**. II Kings 19:16 as well as Isaiah 37:4*

Hezekiah was caught in a dilemma. He knew the threat of Sennacherib was real and dangerous for Judah. He also knew, however, there was no power like the God of Israel. In this prayer, Hezekiah draws a strong contrast between Sennacherib and his dead idols on the one hand, and the Living God of Israel on the other, whose power had no limits.

In his prophecy, Jeremiah draws a strong contrast between the Living God of Israel and the gods of wood and stone worshipped by Israel's pagan enemies.

*But the LORD (Jehovah) is the true God (Elohim); he is **the living God (Elohim)**, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath. Jeremiah 10:10*

This contrasts the powerlessness of the idols with the mighty power of the living God.

The people of Judah were claiming prophetic insight when God had not spoken. They were commanded not to speak in the name of the Living God.

*But you must not mention 'the oracle of the LORD (Jehovah) again, because every man's own word becomes his oracle and so you distort the words of **the living God (Elohim)**, the LORD (Jehovah) Almighty (Sabaoth), our God (Elohim). Jeremiah 23:36*

The message these people pronounced was false teaching and distortion. God promised to punish if they claimed prophetic inspiration when he had not spoken.

Darius liked Daniel, but this Jewish prince was a threat to other leaders. They trapped Darius into placing Daniel in the lions den. Next morning, Darius rushed out to see what had happened.

*When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of **the living God (Elohim)**, has your God (Elohim), whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" Daniel 6:20*

The cry of Darius identifies his belief. He was convinced that the God whom Daniel served, unlike the gods of wood and stone, was living and powerful, able to defend Daniel.

When Daniel was removed from the den and his enemies thrown into it, Darius made a decree.

*"I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God (Elohim) of Daniel. For he is **the living God (Elohim)** and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed." Daniel 6:26, 27*

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Darius' decree drew a contrast between the idols, worshipped in the land, and "the living God," whom Daniel served. He decreed that the whole kingdom must fear and reverence the God Daniel worshipped because He is the living God and defends His people.

Notice that in each of the passages, where "Elohim Chayim" occurs, there is a pointed reference to God as the Sovereign God who was greater than all gods and powerful to defeat the enemies of His people. This, of course, is what "Elohim" means.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The name "θεοῦ ζῶντος" or "the living God" appears at least 12 times in the New Testament. There are several passages, using this name, which focus on the power and authority of God.

At the trial of Jesus, before the Sanhedrin, the high priest used this name.

*The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the **living God**: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Matthew 23:63*

The high priest used "the living God" as the authority with whom one enters into an oath to guarantee the integrity of one's words.

Jesus was talking with the people about His claim to be the Bread of Life.

Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. John 6:57

Jesus claimed He was sent by the Living Father and to be sustained by Him. This describes both power and authority.

The apostle Paul also used this name for God. In Romans, Paul quoted from Hosea.

*It will happen that in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of **the living God**.'" Romans 9:26*

Paul described the power and authority of God by which He chose to redeem and reclaim wandering Jews and Gentiles.

*(and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in **the living God**, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe. I Timothy 4:10*

Paul was saying that "the living God" was the focal point of their hope; the one worthy of their trust.

The author draws a contrast between the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of animals. He was claiming that the blood of Christ cleanses us so that we can serve the living God. It is a picture of the living God as a monarch.

New Testament authors also use "the living God" to draw a sharp contrast between the worship of God and the worship of idols.

*Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of **the Living God**." Matthew 16:16*

Peter identified Jesus as deity in two ways:

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- You are the Christ - which means the Messiah
- You are the Son of the Living God

Many people in the area claimed to be the Messiah. Many other people worshipped a host of idols. Peter was saying that Jesus was the real Messiah and stood against all impostors.

In Lystra, Paul and Barnabas healed a crippled man and the people mistook them for deities and worshipped them.

*"Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to **the living God**, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them.
Acts 14:15*

Paul contrasts the living God, who healed the crippled man, with the idols, who had done nothing for this man.

In II Corinthians, Paul talked about the dilemma of Christians married to unbelievers.

*What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of **the living God**. As God has said, "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."
II Corinthians 6:16*

The fact that the living God takes up residence in the Christian is the theological reason upon which Paul bases his position. There is no way a Christian can become yoked with an unbeliever and still be faithful to his/her relationship with the living God.

Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica.

*For they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve **the living and true God**, ..."
Thessalonians 1:9*

These people had been involved in idol worship like all the others in that city. Paul describes the abrupt shift in their conduct.

In the use of the words "El Chayim," the authors stressed **the strength, the power of God**. In the use of the words "Elohim Chayim," the different writers emphasized **the mercy and majesty of God**. God is Supreme, God is sovereign over all kings.

In the New Testament, the authors used "the living God" to highlight three areas:

- God's power and authority
- The contrast between "the living God" on the one hand, and the dead idols worshipped by the pagans.
- The contrast between the effectiveness of the sacrifice of Jesus and the ineffective, pagan sacrifice of animals.

We live in a world of power. People everywhere live with the uncomfortable idea that we have the power to blow up our planet many times over. By contrast, individual persons seem to have less personal power than ever before. These conflicting conditions tend to make a person feel helpless and unable to make a difference in the world.

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We need to remember that our God is El Chayim, the God of power and authority; He is Elohim Chayim, the supreme majestic God who rules over all rulers no matter what kind of bomb power they may possess. Our strength is in His power, not ours. We can make a difference because of who God is. We are safe in His powerful hands.

ANCIENT OF DAYS

The prophet Daniel is the only one in the Old Testament who uses this name for God. Daniel's three uses of the name appear only in his report of a vision in chapter seven.

*"As I looked, "thrones were set in place and the **Ancient of Days** took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated and the books were opened." Daniel 7:9, 10*

Notice that Daniel saw thrones, a vision of royalty. It is a picture of God, the King whose name is "The Ancient of Days." The king was dressed in white, a symbol of purity; His throne is a flame of fire, a symbol of intense power to judge. Daniel reported that thousands upon thousands attended Him and myriads of people stood before Him. All this symbolized the vast sphere of His power. In the context of the above quotation, it mentions that He even exerted dominion over the beasts, who were symbols of evil power.

Daniel describes more of what he saw in his vision:

*In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the **Ancient of Days** and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. Daniel 7:13, 14*

Here again, "The Ancient of Days" was portrayed as a king. The "Son of Man," whom we identify as the Messiah, was **presented** to "The Ancient of Days." No one just walks into the presence of a king. He must be properly presented.

There is another royal image in this part of Daniel's vision. "The Ancient of Days" gave the son of man, the Messiah, an everlasting dominion, glory and a kingdom that would never be destroyed. The giving of a kingdom is the task of kings. This is a unique kingdom because it is one that never will be destroyed. In every era there have been kingdoms that rose, but each had a day when it came to an end. It may have been by the death of the monarch or the destruction of the kingdom, but they all came to an end, but this kingdom was different. It would never be destroyed.

There is a third image which can also be a royal reference. In this kingdom which "The Ancient of Days" presents to the Son of Man, the peoples, nations, and men of every language will worship the Son of Man, the Messiah. In order for the "Ancient of Days" to give away kingdoms and cause people to worship the Messiah, He must be the ruler over all the peoples of the world.

Daniel uses the name "Ancient of Days" again in this vision when he said,

*As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them until the **Ancient of Days** came and pronounced judgment in favor*

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of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. Daniel 7:21, 22

Daniel's vision shifts the image from that of a king to that of a king as judge. We are aware of the fact that when there was an impasse in the legal system of a country, the king was usually the final judge of the land.

In the apocalyptic books, Daniel and Revelation, the word "horn" is used to describe a political power, a nation. In Daniel's vision, the horn, a small rising national power, waged war against the saints of the Most High and overpowered them. "The Ancient of Days" entered the scene and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints. It was and still is unusual for any king to rule in favor of the righteous. In real life situations, history bears out the fact that the opposite is usually the case.

Notice also that the "Ancient of Days" not only rendered judgment but also passes down a judgment in favor of the saints and against this rising power of evil. The saints are to take possession of the kingdom. Again, only a king who is also the final judge of the realm, can accomplish this.

One needs to ask, why does Daniel refer to this king and judge as "The Ancient of Days?" A king or ruler can be very powerful. All kings and rulers, however, have one thing in common - there is a beginning and an end to their power. However, the king, in Daniel's vision is different. He is "The Ancient of Days." This suggests that He always was, is and will be. A point on the calendar of history does not identify His rise to power. His rule has no beginning and it will never end. He is eternal.

Isaiah, in chapter six, gives us another insight into this name. He described the traumatic events surrounding the death of king Uzziah. His death had created a vacuum of power, even though the successor to the throne had already been identified. In our own times, when President Kennedy was killed, there was a vacuum of power for a period of time, even though the laws of our land dictate a chain of accession to the presidency, should a president die or be removed from office. The vacuum of power resulting from both of these situations created a period of tension which lasted until power was again identified and properly in place.

"The Ancient of Days" does not face the termination of His power, ever. An atmosphere of enduring peace and security, therefore, pervades His reign.

Rulers, in every nation, rise and fall. With each uneasy accession to power there is a time of tension and disquiet which pervades the land. "The Ancient of Days" is an eternal king whose kingdom never ends. He, therefore, sustains His people in peace and confidence no matter how difficult circumstances may appear to be. He is "The Ancient of Days" even for us.

THE CONCLUSION

We believe the names for God, in the Bible, are a divine choice. These names are a major means by which God has allowed us to penetrate the brightness with which He surrounds Himself, in order to discover something of His greatness. These names are God's compassionate revelation of Himself so that a meaningful relationship can be sustained with His people.

A study of the names we have observed and the context in which they are presented, makes it clear that this selection process is intentional, not casual. Each name or its variation, was chosen with great care. As we discover what each name means and how it is used in the context, only then can we grasp a tiny glimpse of what God revealed about His nature. God's self-revelation enables our finite minds to lay hold upon an imperceptible facet of His infinity with astonishing precision.

Some Christians invent names for God. This practice may not be wrong, but it could easily be unwise. We know we can depend on the Biblical names for God. The names for God which we invent, however, are only as dependable as the accuracy of our insights into God's character and nature. Sometimes that is not too reliable.

This study points out that there is a definite relationship between the Biblical name for God and the context in which it is used. The compound names for God are far more meaningful than our commonly used texts indicate. These compound names present a level of emphasis which could otherwise escape our attention. Again, the compound names for God give us a little glimpse of just how many-faceted the nature of God really is.

A discovery of the nature of God, through a study of His names, is a bit like standing awestruck within the veil of the temple. It fills one with awe, wonder and reverence. An awareness of who God is, through an understanding of His names, draws back the curtain on the panorama of His nature and character. These names convey something of the magnificent nature of the infinite God. If one were to use just one name for God, whichever one it might be, the view of God it presents would be doomed to inappropriate limitation.

The names of God, found in the Scriptures, convey precise information about His nature and character. These clear insights are not so vividly presented anywhere else in the Bible. The infinite God has disclosed Himself to our finite minds through these awesome names. It is a unique self-disclosure of God. This being the case, it behooves us to know His names more thoroughly that we might know Him better.

We must finally ask ourselves, What have we gleaned from God's revelation of Himself through these carefully chosen names? What do we know about God that we did not know before? How has this search changed our understanding, our awareness of God?

Two ingredients frame our thinking concerning these discoveries: We must remember that we are finite beings seeking to comprehend the infinite one. Our relationship with God is much like a marriage. Intimate discovery of personality is not often found in vast catalogues of information. It is more often detected in little gems of understanding pried from the unyielding ground of a growing relationship. In such relationships, the intimate self-disclosure of one to another involves tiny bits of

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information which are most significant in the search for an understanding of the personality and character of the beloved. It is so in our search to know God.

In the traumas of the Biblical narratives, the awareness that God is eternal is the most prevalent disclosure. This includes the idea that God predates time, but it also includes the fact that He is changeless. What God was, He is. This is always tied to the awareness that God is just. A refreshing insight into this justice is the fact that it is not a venting of wrath, but a firm, parental way of drawing us back to Himself.

There is the very reassuring awareness that God is the sovereign who rules kings and people of power. The tragedies of our world make this discovery a primary understanding. God must be greater than any other force in order to be God.

The God who is just in His judgment, is also a God of compassion. God illustrates His compassion in several names He ascribes to Himself. God is:

- | | | |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| a. Refuge | d. Our peace | g. Present |
| b. Protector | e. Benevolent | h. Personal |
| c. Shepherd | f. Merciful | i. He sees me |

This is noteworthy. There is a significant number of people who will not read the Old Testament because the God they think they find there seems to have no compassion at all, only judgment.

Reflecting on the image of God that we gain through His names, helps us to understand just how Isaiah felt when he was in the temple and saw the Lord high and lifted up. Meditating upon the meaning of God's names causes me to become keenly aware of my own shortcomings when I see His greatness. We can all cry out with Isaiah, "woe is me, for I am undone!" For me, one of the great, moving images of God was disclosed as I read what God said of Himself when He gave the ten commandments to Moses. God revealed Himself in these words.

Then the LORD (Jehovah) came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD, (Jehovah) and he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD (Jehovah), The LORD (Jehovah), the compassionate and gracious God, (El) slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." Exodus 34:5-7

For all of these names and all that they are intended to share with us about who God is, we can only say, "Amen!"