

# RIGHTLY KNOWING GOD – WHO HE IS

## What is in a name? Why are God's names important?

### 1. God's Names Reveal His Person:

**Exodus 3:13–14** Then Moses said to God, “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

### 2. God's Names Represent Him:

**Psalms 8:1** “O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!”

### 3. Therefore, God's Names Are Sacred:

**Exodus 20:7** “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.” (Matthew 6:9)

Elohim: אֱלֹהִים lit. “powerful ones or God, gods or most high ones;” describes God as Creator - Sustainer of the universe. Usually translated as “God” in the New Testament.

Adonai: אֲדֹנָי lit. “my lords, or master, lord, Lord” used exclusively of God.

Yahweh, or YHWH יהוה: “LORD, I AM” probably from the verb “to be,” is God's personal name in covenant with his creation (Genesis 2:4) and his people, especially Israel (Exodus 3:13-15),

## THEOLOGY

The Godhead<sup>1</sup> exists eternally in three persons<sup>2</sup>—the Father<sup>3</sup>, the Son, and the Holy Spirit<sup>4</sup> and there is one God<sup>5</sup>. The Son is not the Father<sup>6</sup>, the Son is not the Spirit<sup>7</sup> and the Spirit is not the Father.<sup>8</sup> The Father not begotten, the Son eternally begotten of the Father. Each person of the Trinity is co-equal<sup>9</sup>, co-eternal<sup>10</sup> and exists in perfect harmony, loving<sup>11</sup> and glorifying each other.

## A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

### *Why Know God?*

*Imitation of Christ*, Thomas a Kempis (1418) “What good does it do you if you dispute loftily about the Trinity, but lack humility and, therefore, displease the Trinity? It's not lofty words that make you righteous or holy or dearer to God, but a virtuous life. I would much rather experience contrition than to be able to give a definition of it. But if you knew the whole Bible by heart, along with all the definitions of the philosophers, what good would this be without grace and love? Naturally, everyone wants knowledge, but what use is that knowledge without the fear of God? A humble peasant who serves God is much more pleasing to Him than an arrogant academic who neglects his own soul. If I were to possess all the knowledge in the world, and yet lacked love, what good would this be in sight of God, who will judge me by what I have done?”

## SELF-REFLECTION

What is important to you about the name of God?

How does knowing God impact your life? List some specific ways.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. 3:16-17; Matt. 28:19. “God eternally exists as Three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and each is fully God, and there is one God.” (Grudem, Wayne A. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 226).

<sup>2</sup> “God” is plural (*’ēlōhīm*), possibly implying the Trinity, and **one** (*’ehād*) may suggest a unity of the Persons in the Godhead” (Walvoord, John F., and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, VI, p.274

<sup>3</sup> Πατήρ (Father) John 6:27; Eph. 1:3; Eph. 1:17; Eph. 4:6; James. 1:17; Rev. 1:8; “The term *father* denotes an immanent and eternal relation of the first Trinitarian person. God in himself and irrespective of any reference to the created universe is a father: the Father of the Son.” (Shedd, William Greenough Thayer. *Dogmatic Theology*. Edited by Alan W. Gomes. 3rd ed. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2003, 280). “*God the Father is clearly God*. This is evident from the first verse of the Bible, where God created the heaven and the earth. It is evident through the Old and New Testaments, where God the Father is clearly viewed as sovereign Lord overall and where Jesus prays to his Father in heaven.” (Grudem, Wayne A. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 234).

<sup>4</sup> The Holy Spirit is a person of the Trinity cf. Acts 10:19; John 14:26, 15:26; Rom 8:15-16; Matt. 12:31-32; Isa. 61:1; Acts 8:29, 13:2; Eph. 4:30. The Holy Spirit is fully God and equal in all ways to the Father and the Son “The third person in the Godhead is denominated the Spirit with reference to his person, not his essence. He is no more spiritual as to his substance than is the Father or the Son. Neither is he denominated the “Holy” Spirit because holiness is any more peculiar to him than to the first and second persons; but because he is the author of holiness in creatures” (Shed, William Greenough Thayer. *Dogmatic Theology*, 2003, 269).

<sup>5</sup> Jewish monotheism stood in contrast to pagan polytheism and statement of a singular God is found often in Old Testament scriptures: Deut. 4:35, 39; 5:7; 6:4; 32:39; Isa 42:8, 46:9; 43:10 and NT: Eph. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; James 2:19. The Augsburg Confession Article I “there are three Persons, of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” The Nicene Creed of 325: “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.” Dallas Theological Seminary Articles of Faith Article II.

<sup>6</sup> John 20:17

<sup>7</sup> John 14:16

<sup>8</sup> John 14:26

<sup>9</sup> Basil of Nyssa (*Apology of the Apology*) in defending the equality of the persons of the Trinity (3.7, p.150) “relatively greater or less”, (1.24, p.66) have an “equality of honor” and (1.22, p.62) are no “less in perfection.”

<sup>10</sup> Basil of Nyssa (*Apology of the Apology*, 2.6, p.107) writes in refuting the subordination argument of Eunomius “Like the light that shines from the sun,” (the Father and the Son) “are co-existent with the sun, whose cause indeed is in the sun but whose existence is synchronous with the sun, not being a later addition.”

<sup>11</sup> The love of the Father for the Son (John 3:35; 17:24) and the Son for the Father (14:31).