

January 24, 2010  
**First Things First ... Honouring the Name**  
**Deuteronomy 5:8-11**

*"You must not misuse the name of the LORD your God. The LORD will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name."* This sounds simple enough, doesn't it? It simply means that when we swear or curse, we should simply not use His name(s): "God," "Jesus," "Lord," etc. Right? Yes! It is good never to use our Lord's name(s) as a swear word! Of course, it is good not to use any swear word at all!

But this command actually goes MUCH deeper than simply the words that happen to cross my lips. In Proverbs we read, *"My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man."* Your "name" speaks to your character. It refers to your reputation. It is a reflection of who you are.

This command reminds me of who God is, of His character. His "name" refers to who He is - the holy, powerful, loving God who saves me. Do I speak of the Lord in my conversations? If people know I name Jesus as my Lord, do I live like that? Are my actions consistent with my words?

There are many names given to God in the Old Testament. This morning we'll reflect on some of these names for God and what they can teach us about who God is. We will be able to know Him and worship Him better as we learn more of His character.

*Elohim*

In Genesis 1:1 we read that, *"In the beginning GOD created ..."* When you read the word "God" referring to our God in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word is *"elohim."* *"Elohim"* comes from the Hebrew word for "strength" or "power." That's a good way to describe God isn't it? - the Strong and Powerful One.

This name for God is used 9 times in Psalm 42. Think about God's strength and power as you read Psalm 42:

*EI*

"El" is another name often used for God. It is often combined with other words to emphasize other qualities of God's nature. For example:

- *El Elyon* - our Most High God
- *El 'Olam* - our Everlasting God
- *El Shaddai* - God Almighty

Four times, God Almighty, *El Shaddai*, is mentioned by Asaph, the author of Psalm 80. Asaph prays that God - God Almighty (*El Shaddai*) - would be near us, comfort us, protect us, and help us grow as strong, fruitful vines to the glory of the Lord. Bring your life, struggles, hopes, fears, joys, dreams, disappointments, celebrations, past, future - and this very moment - to God Almighty, Everlasting, Most High ...

Read Psalm 80

### *Adonai*

In most English translations of the Old Testament, God is referred to as "Lord" (capital "L" then lowercase) and "LORD" (all capitals). These refer to different Hebrew names for God. First of all, let's think about "Lord" (capital and lowercase) - Hebrew "*Adonai*"; in a few moments we'll look at "LORD" (all capitals) - Hebrew "*Yahweh*."

"*Adon*" is the Hebrew word for a lord or master. It was the common word for the person who had absolute power over your life, to whom you owed ultimate allegiance, and whom you served. The lord owned everything - you were his property (in Genesis 40:1, Pharaoh is the Hebrew slaves' "*adon*" in Egypt). Of course human lords can be good ... or terrible!

Scripture uses this word, "*Adonai*," to describe God. The Lord is the One to whom I owe ultimate allegiance, whom I serve, and who - whether I like to admit it or not - has absolute power over my life. But my Lord is a loving Master. I know He will do what is best for me, always.

It is worth keeping in mind that all I am and all I have really does belong to the Lord. My talents, gifts, abilities and opportunities are gifts from Him - but they are ultimately still His. I am called to use them for His glory. All the material possessions I have - my investments, salary, possessions - are gifts from Him (He gives me the ability and opportunity to earn income). I am called to use them for His glory.

We are the Lord's stewards - caretakers of the His world and caretakers of what He has given us. How can I use the gifts He has given me wisely and well, for His

glory?

Daniel 9:4-19 used the name "*adonai*" ten times. It is a wonderful prayer of confession and repentance. As we come before our Lord - our Master - today, let us come humbly, acknowledging that we often fail, but also knowing that we are in the presence of a Lord who loves us, forgives us, and lifts us up renewed ...

### *Yahweh*

You may notice that often in the Old Testament the word "LORD" is all capitalized. This is the Hebrew word "*YHWH*" or "*Yahweh*." This name for God is by far the most common - used approximately 7,000 times. "*Yahweh*" is the special name that God revealed to Moses at the burning bush: God said to Moses, "*I am (YHWH) who I am (YHWH). This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM' (YHWH) has sent me to you.' ... This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.*" (Exodus 3:14-15).

"*Yahweh*" comes from the Hebrew verb "to be." The actual tense of the verb is impossible to tell - it could be past, present or future - or all three! The name declares God's absolute being - the source of everything, without beginning and without end. God is. Period. God was. Period. God will be. Period.

The Jews stopped pronouncing this name by about 200 A.D., afraid of breaking the third commandment. To this day, when Jews publicly read Scripture, instead of pronouncing the name "*Yahweh*" when they come to the word "*YHWH*," they will say aloud "*Adonai*." To represent this substitution, our English translations commonly use the all-capitalized word "LORD" to represent the Hebrew word "*Yahweh*." If you want a challenging verbal exercise, try reading aloud one of the Psalms with several "*LORD*"s in it, but instead of reading aloud "*LORD*" say the actual Hebrew word, "*Yahweh*" (e.g. Psalm 3:1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8)!<sup>1</sup>

Like other names for God, *Yahweh* is often combined with other descriptors:

- *Yahweh Yireh* (or Latinized - Jehovah-Jireh) - "The Lord will Provide" (Genesis 22:14);
- *Yahweh Rophe* - "The Lord who Heals" (Exodus 15:22-26) - this implies

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<sup>1</sup> Christians have never been as superstitious about pronouncing *YHWH* as the Jews were. But how was the word to be pronounced? We now know that "*Yahweh*" is probably the most likely, reflecting the common construction of Hebrew verbs. However one innovative concoction was to take the consonants from *YHWH* (or in Latin "*JHVH*" - Latin does not have "y" or "w" so they substituted letters), and add the vowel sounds from a completely different word - "*Adonai*." The result - *J - a - H - o - V - ai - H*. An artificial word created by shuffling together the consonants and vowels of two completely separate words! This artificial new word - "Jehovah" became very common! Note this is NOT a biblical word at all. It is not a Hebrew word. The first recorded use of this form dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century: Raymundus Martini, a Spanish Dominican monk, used it in his book *Pugeo Fidei* (c.1270). Is it OK to use the word "Jehovah"? Sure! But do remember that it is not a biblical word, but an artificial creation: a medieval blending of two completely separate words.

- spiritual, emotional as well as physical healing; God heals body, soul and spirit;
- *Yahweh M'kaddesh* - "The Lord who Sanctifies" (Leviticus 20:8) - by forgiving our sin;
  - *Yahweh Shalom* - "The Lord our Peace" (Judges 6:24). Shalom means the peace that results from being a whole person in right relationship to God and to one's fellow man;
  - *Yahweh Rohi* - "The Lord our Shepherd" (Psalm 23).

God was in the past - He will be in the future - He is in the present. Right now He is with you. Praise Him. Celebrate His love. Rejoice in His presence. Read Psalm 23

### *Honouring the Lord's Name*

We honour the Lord's name because we honour the Lord! As you read Psalm 91, reflect on the great and wonderful God we have!

This command reminds use of who God is, of His character. His "name" refers to who He is - the holy, powerful, loving God who saves us. Do you speak of the Lord in your conversations? If people know you name Jesus as my Lord, do you live like that? Are your actions consistent with your words?

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