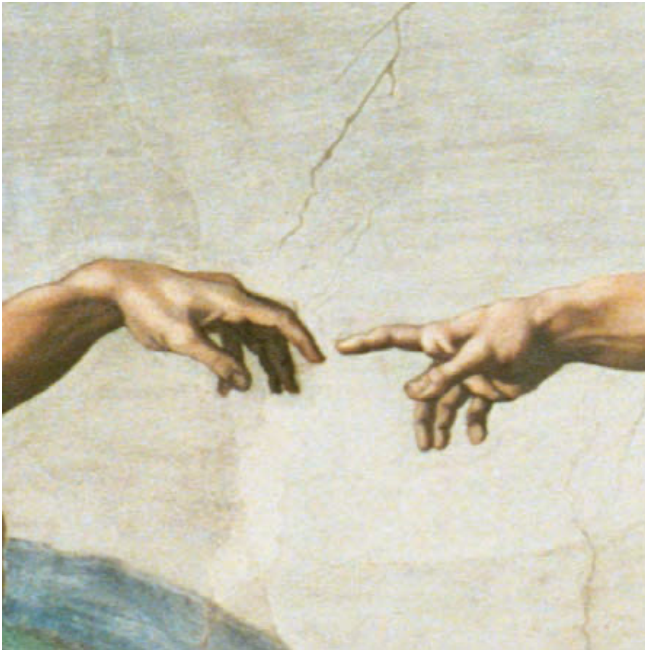




Let me Introduce You to God

[Theology 101]



Theology 101 (Session 1)

Goals This Week

- Introduce & Survey the Top 5 Chapters on Theology Proper.
- Synthesize what we learn from these chapters & attempt to understand how God has revealed Himself.

Top 5 Chapters on Theology Proper

1. Genesis 1
2. Exodus 3
3. Psalm 139
4. Psalm 145
5. Isaiah 40

"Theology" is thinking true & profound thoughts about God.

- True thoughts (Acts 17:29)
- Profound thoughts (Ps. 139:6)

Big View of God:

- True view is not necessarily a big view...
- Grand Canyon illustration...

Practical Theology:

- Impressive view of God (makes an impression)
- BIG GOD = small problems...

Genesis 1, "In the Beginning..."

1. God is Actual (Existence & Eternality)
2. God is Powerful (Omnipotence)
3. God is Personal (Relevance)

God is Actual (Existence)

- 1) Genesis introduces God, who then makes up the primary protagonist of the Bible.
- 2) The Bible is all about God, Who He is, and what He has Done. God is the Creator, Sustainer, & Redeemer of All things...
- 3) The Bible consists of a self-authenticating book, wherein God has revealed Himself. The Bible never defends the existence of God; it merely declares it! (cf. Gen. 1:1; John 17:3; Heb. 11:6)
- 4) The Bible is the autobiography of God. “God” appears 32 times in Genesis 1 without the use of pronouns. *Genesis 1 portrays God as the infinite, eternal, personal, and moral first cause.*
- 5) God’s introduction in the book of Genesis anticipates and refutes all false philosophies such as *atheism, pantheism, polytheism, materialism, humanism, & evolutionism.*

God is Eternal (Eternality)

- 1) The very fact that God creates all things in Genesis 1 implies that God preexisted that creation and that He is not at all dependent upon creation. These observations underscore God’s eternity.
- 2) Scripture establishes God’s eternity in multiple ways: his existence transcends temporal boundaries, his nature remains immutable across all ages, and his knowledge encompasses all moments simultaneously.
- 3) God existed “from everlasting to everlasting” ([Ps 90:2](#)) before creation itself. He “inhabits eternity” ([Isa 57:15](#)) and identifies himself as “the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” ([Rev 1:8](#)) language reinforced in Revelation where Christ claims the same titles ([Rev 22:13](#)). Unlike creation, which experiences change and decay, God endures while creation perishes, and “You are the same, / And Your years will have no end.” ([Ps 102:25–27](#)) God’s self-revelation to Moses—“I AM WHO I AM” ([Exod 3:14](#))—captures this timeless existence in the present tense.

- 4) Theologically, God's eternity operates on a fundamentally different plane than temporal existence. God "does not exist within time but rather exists before and outside of time," whereas creatures "change, improve, and decline within time."^[1] Because God is immutable with no beginning or end and does not change or move, "can one say he exists in time? Is not another mode of existence—eternity—necessary?"^[2] Time functions for God "like a great canvas spread before him, every moment of which he can take in simultaneously. To him, all times are present."^[1]
- 5) This doctrine has profound implications. As creator of all things, God "must transcend all he has created, including time."^[3] God's eternity connects inseparably with his immutability and omniscience—he "comprehends all things at once," does not "increase in knowledge and wisdom," and "sees all things that have ever been or shall ever be at once."^[4] Jesus Christ participates in this eternity, remaining "the same yesterday, today, and forever." ([Heb 13:8](#))
- 6) Additional passages emphasizing God's eternal nature include Isaiah's description of God as "the everlasting God, the LORD, / The Creator of the ends of the earth," ([Isa 40:28](#)) Paul's doxology to "the King eternal, immortal, invisible," ([1 Tim 1:17](#)) and the psalmist's reflection that "a thousand years in Your sight / Are like yesterday," paralleled in 2 Peter's statement that "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." ([Ps 90:4](#); [2 Pet 3:8](#))

Sources:

[1] Joel B. Carini, "[God's Eternity](#)," in *Lexham Survey of Theology*, ed. Mark Ward et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018). [See [here](#), [here](#).]

[2] Moisés Silva and Merrill Chapin Tenney, in *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible, D-G* (Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation, 2009), [417](#).

[3] J. A. McGuire-Moushon and Rachel Klippenstein, "[Eternity](#)," in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al.

(Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014). [See [here](#).]

[4] Mark Jones, [*God Is: A Devotional Guide to the Attributes of God*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), [52](#).

Arguments for the Existence of God:

- Throughout the centuries Orthodox Christianity has harness four primary arguments for the existence of God:
 - a) Cosmological argument: (Rom. 1:19-20)
 - b) Teleological argument: (Acts 14:17)
 - c) Anthropological argument: (Acts 17:28-29)
 - d) Moral argument: (Rom. 2:14-15)

Cosmological Argument (Rom. 1:19-20)

- Every effect must also have a cause...
- The cosmological argument begins with observable reality—that things exist—and reasons toward God’s existence as their explanation. Rather than treating God as one cause among many, the argument identifies an ultimate originating force that transcends the chain of causation.
- When we see a painting, we assume there is a painter. When we see a building, we assume there is a builder. When we see creation, we rightly assume there is a Creator.

Teleological Argument (Acts 14:17)

- Orderliness implies design, intelligence, & purpose.
- In his book, *The Blind Watchmaker*, Dawkins writes: “Biology is the study of complicated things that give appearance of having been designed for a purpose.” Yet he proceeds to argue that it was not designed after all! It simply gives “the illusion of design and planning.”
- Meyer & Noebel write, “If you find it difficult to believe in random particles assembling themselves into a fine-tuned universe, you are not alone.

- The English astronomer and mathematician Fred Hoyle, who coined the term “big bang” and served for years as a leading atheist spokesman, said there is a better chance of producing a Boeing 747 via a junkyard explosion than there is of arriving at life by accident.
- Further, Hoyle expresses skepticism about the chance development of DNA, noting that merely lining up the necessary enzymes by chance would consume 20 billion years.
- Three respected scientists—Charles Thaxton, Walter Bradley, and Roger Olsen—wrote in *The Mystery of Life’s Origin* that “the undirected flow of energy through a primordial atmosphere and ocean is at present a woefully inadequate explanation for the incredible complexity associated with even simple living systems and is probably wrong.” (Myers & Noebel)

As Nancy Pearcey put it in World magazine (5/27/00, p. 12):

- 1) The revolution in molecular biology in recent decades has revealed that the core of life is a *message* – the DNA code. This recasts the classic design argument as a question about the origin of biological *information*: Who or what “wrote” the code?
- 2) The new field of information theory tells us that *messages* are not produced by chemical or physical *forces* in the constituent atoms. Instead, they require an *intelligent cause*.
- 3) Ryken quotes from Francis Crick, the brilliant scientist who won the Nobel Prize for discovering the structure of DNA. Crick writes: “Biologists must constantly keep in mind that what they see was not designed, but rather evolved.”
- 4) As Ryken puts it: “Apparently it is not easy to be a biologist and an atheist at the same time. You really have to be careful in the laboratory. You keep finding evidence of design all over the place, so you have to keep reminding yourself that the universe is not designed” (*Discovering God*, p. 87).

Anthropological Argument (Acts 17:28-29)

- A living, intelligent creature argues for a living, intelligent Creator (Psalm 94:9).
- The anthropological argument asks how humanity—a moral, intelligent, living being—can exist apart from a moral, intelligent, living God. Rather than treating morality in isolation, this argument examines the full range of human characteristics and contends that their origin requires an adequate cause.
- The various dimensions of human existence—morality, intellect, emotion, and spiritual awareness—collectively demand explanation through a being possessing these same qualities. Material or unconscious forces could not generate human consciousness; evolutionary processes cannot account for conscience, soul, or religious instinct, nor can lifeless matter produce living offspring. Since humans possess personality (intellect, emotion, and will) along with moral awareness, the first cause must similarly possess personality and moral capacity to determine right from wrong.

Moral Argument (Rom. 2:14-15)

- The universal reality of morality argues against the evolutionary process and for a moral Creator.
- The argument follows a logical structure: if objective moral values exist, then God exists; objective moral values do exist; therefore, God exists. The most plausible source for objective moral values is God's nature or character. A theistic framework—where humans are made by a good God to reflect His character—provides a more natural foundation for ethics than alternatives, grounding human dignity and rights in divine creation rather than impersonal processes.
- The argument's strength lies in explaining why moral conviction feels binding and universal rather than culturally constructed, making God's existence the most coherent explanation for morality's objectivity.

Limitations to Logical Arguments

- These logical arguments represent a theology based on man's reason and do not necessarily lead to the true God. These "natural proofs" are exercises in building theology "from below," of measuring God by human thinking. These arguments do not necessarily point logically to the triune God of the Bible since many who have used them did not believe in the true God. By themselves, these "natural proofs" are not proofs of the existence of any god without first presupposing what a god is.
- In other words, one still needs the Bible to arrive at a true understanding of the infinite & triune God of the Bible. Yet these arguments can be helpful in so much as they reflect the reasoning of the Scripture itself (cf. the passages listed above).

God is Powerful (Omnipotence)

- 1) Genesis 1 not only teaches us that God actually exists, but also that God is powerful! God's "omnipotence" describes his ability to do anything consistent with his nature.
- 2) **ELOHIM**: "God." The word "God" is a title, not a name. The root "El" is derived from either the root meaning "mighty one," or the root meaning "one to be feared."
- 3) The term "El" was actually used by many cultures in the ancient near east to describe their deities. While "El" is singular, the word "Elohim" is in the plural.
- 4) The Hebrew language violates its own grammar when it uses the plural noun Elohim with singular verbs. This interesting construction underscores God's majesty, as well as hints at His unified plurality (i.e. Tri-unity).
- 5) The Hebrew language has another unique concept known as the plural of Majesty, which expresses quality rather than quantity.
- 6) Another example of this concept can be seen in the Hebrew word "Behemoth," which is the plural form for "beast." Yet this word does not refer to many beasts, but rather to a very big beast (Job 40:15). In other words, in the vast amount of appearances, "Elohim" does not mean "gods," but "GOD."
- 7) "Elohim" occurs 2,570x in the OT, and 32x in Genesis 1 alone. This is the title God decides to use to introduce

Himself, and it describes Him as Creator, Preserver, Transcendent, Mighty and Strong.

- 8) "The power of God is that ability and strength whereby He can bring to pass whatsoever He pleases, whatsoever His infinite wisdom may direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of His will may resolve. How vain would be the eternal counsels, if power did not step in to execute them."
(Stephen Charnock).
- 9) "Without power His mercy would be but feeble pity, His promises an empty sound, His threatenings a mere scarecrow. God's power is like Himself: infinite, eternal, incomprehensible; it can neither be checked, restrained, nor frustrated by the creature" (Stephen Charnock).
- 10) Nothing is too hard or impossible for God (Gen. 18:14; Job 42:2; Jer. 32:27; Zech. 8:6; Matt. 3:9; 19:26; 26:53; Luke 1:37; 18:27; Eph. 3:20).
- 11) Rather, God does whatever he pleases (Ps. 115:3; Isa. 14:24, 27; 46:10; 55:11; Dan. 4:35).
- 12) God's works reveal his omnipotence (Psalms 8; 18; 19; 24; 29; 33; 104): creation (Genesis 1; Ps. 8:3; Isa. 42:5; 44:24; 45:12, 18; 48:13; Zech. 12:1; Rom. 1:20), providence (Heb. 1:3), and redemption (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:24).

Measuring Infinite Power:

- Have you ever thought how to measure God's power? Infinite power means it is ultimately unmeasurable, however, what if we tried to put a number on it? J.D. Greer attempts to calculate what we can concerning the power of God as follows:
- The average output of a human on a row machine is about 320 watts in 2 minutes, enough to run 5 energy efficient light bulbs for 2 minutes. Contrast this with God. Though only 9,096 are visible to the naked eye, 3 septillion stars exist in the universe [3 with 24 "0's"].

Just for perspective on that number...

- 1 million seconds = 11 days
- 1 Billion seconds = 32 yrs.

- 1 Trillion seconds = 32,000 yrs.
- Each single star emits every second the average energy output of a trillion atomic bombs. So, in other words, the energy released from one star for one second could power my electric fan for over 23,000 yrs. Yet God upholds all of the universe with the WORD of His power.

God is Personal

- 1) Even more than being actual & powerful, Genesis 1 teaches that God is personal.
- 2) Note the following observations from Gen. 1.
- 3) Though all time, space, and matter began in Genesis 1:1, God preexisted them. In other words, God exists as the infinite, eternal, personal, and moral first cause to the universe.
- 4) God is intelligent in that He can speak; He wise in that He can construct a complex universe. Yet God is personal in that He speaks with mankind, desiring to be known and loved by them.
- 5) God is more than pure energy. Pure energy does not create; it explodes. The harnessing of energy to purposeful ends indicates the presence of someone with a plan who is doing the harnessing.
- 6) The Genesis creation account describes God as this kind of designer. A God who desires purpose rather than randomness and who enacts his authority rather than permit chaos—such a God has the characteristics of a person.
- 7) In contrast to the biblical account, New Spirituality claims God is pure energy, or consciousness. In this view, god has no personality or will. God is a tool to be used, not a person to be known.
- 8) As William E. Brown points out, in *Star Wars* Obi Wan Kenobi doesn't tell Luke Skywalker "The force loves you" or "The force died for your sins." He tells him to "*use* the force." The metaphor is significant; we *use* things; we *relate* to persons.

- 9) Yet the God of the Bible is not merely a force, or an impersonal spirit. No! God thinks, feels, speaks, acts, and does all of this in relation to us.
- 10) "Many, O Lord my God, *are* thy wonderful works *which* thou hast done, And thy thoughts *which are* to us-ward: They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: *If* I would declare and speak *of them* They are more than can be numbered" (Ps. 40:5).
- 11) "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! *If* I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: When I awake, I am still with thee" (Ps. 139:17-18).
- 12) "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? 7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Lk 12:6-7)
- 13) "Thou tellest my wanderings: Put thou my tears into thy bottle: *Are they* not in thy book?" (Ps. 56:8)
- 14) "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: And the Lord hearkened, and heard *it*, And a book of remembrance was written before him For them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name" (Mal. 3:16).
- 15) Psalm 113 describes the transcendence of God when it says that God must lower Himself to simply behold the things in the heaven and the earth. Yet He has done MUCH MORE than merely look at us! He has also...
 - a) Thought of us (Ps. 8; 40:5)
 - b) Spoken to us (Ps. 19)
 - c) Showed Himself to us (Ex. 19; 1 Kg 8)
 - d) Become one of us (Phil. 2)
 - e) Become our servant (Phil 2)
 - f) Die in our place (Matt. 20:28)

Because God is personal & good, He always has in mind what is best for you. So, whatever happens in your life is ultimately designed for your betterment and His glory (Rom. 8:35-39; Eph. 3:14-21).

So What?

- Paul's sermon in Acts 17 reveals the significance of why God has revealed Himself to us. Verse 27 states, "so that" mankind should seek the Lord!

Theology 101 (Session 2)

Exodus 3, "The Great I AM..."

Last Session: (Gen. 1)

1. God is Actual
2. God is Powerful
3. God is Personal

This Session: (Exodus 3)

- 1) God Hears & Cares (Ex. 2:23-25)
- 2) God Appears & Reveals (Ex. 3:1-15)
- 3) God Promises & Delivers (Ex. 3:16-22)

Introducing Theology in Exodus:

- 1) God speaks (Ex. 3:1-6; 19:19)
- 2) God controls history (Ex. 1:12, 21; 4:21)
- 3) God is holy (transcendent) (Ex. 3:5; 33:20)
- 4) God acts in salvation (Ex. 3:8; 6:6-8)

- 5) God acts judgment (Ex. 14:28-29; 32:10, 28)
- 6) God acts in mercy (Ex. 33-34)
- 7) God makes & keeps promises (Ex. 2:24; 3:15-17)
- 8) God longs to live among His people (Ex. 29:45-46)
- 9) God is YHWH (Ex. 3)

Summarizing Theology in Exodus (Read Ex. 6:6-8)

- 1) The Name *YHWH*
- 2) The *Exodus Event*
- 3) Themes of *Rescue & Redemption*
- 4) *Outstretched Arm & Mighty Judgments*
- 5) Key phrase: "*My people... Your God*"
- 6) Key Purpose: "*You shall know*"
- 7) Key Promise: *Land Promised to Patriarchs*

God Hears & Cares (Ex. 2:23-25)

- 30x in Bible God is called "the living God" especially when God acts conspicuously to provide deliverance (cf. 1 Sam. 17:26, 36; 2 Kings 19:4, 16; Dan. 6:20, 26).
- cf. Ps. 115 & parody on false gods.

God Appears & Reveals (Ex. 3:1-10)

- Exodus 3 is not only a key chapter within the book of Exodus, but also within the entirety of the Bible.
- Exodus 3:1-10 records God appearing to Moses via the burning bush, and then God commissioning Moses to lead the Exodus event.

Consider the Concept of Revelation:

- Mankind is twice crippled: we are finite & we are fallen.
- Thus, we could know God even if we tried, but because of our fallen-ness we would not know God.
- We need outside help. We need information from a higher source. Without the answer to these "universal questions"

we do not have a clear picture of the world around us, nor the ability to navigate life.

Contrast the Pagan World: (Prayer to Every god)

- This prayer is inscribed on a tablet that comes from the library of Ashurbanipal, 668– 633 b.c. (probably about the 4th Assyrian King since days of Jonah).

May the fury of my lord's heart be quieted toward me.

May the god who is not known be quieted toward me;

May the goddess who is not known be quieted toward me.

May the god whom I know or do not know be quieted toward me;

May the goddess whom I know or do not know be quieted toward me.

May the heart of my god be quieted toward me;

May the heart of my goddess be quieted toward me.

May my god and goddess be quieted toward me.

May the god [who has become angry with me] be quieted toward me;

May the goddess [who has become angry with me] be quieted toward me. (10)

(lines 11–18 cannot be restored with certainty)

In ignorance I have eaten that forbidden of my god;

In ignorance I have set foot on that prohibited by my goddess. (20)

O Lord, my transgressions are many; great are my sins.

O my god, (my) transgressions are many; great are (my) sins.

O my goddess, (my) transgressions are many; great are (my) sins.

O god whom I know or do not know, (my) transgressions are many; great are (my) sins;

O goddess whom I know or do not know, (my) transgressions are many; great are (my) sins.

The transgression which I have committed, indeed I do not know;

The sin which I have done, indeed I do not know.

The forbidden thing which I have eaten, indeed I do not know;

The prohibited (place) on which I have set foot, indeed I do not know.

The lord in the anger of his heart looked at me; (30)

The god in the rage of his heart confronted me;

When the goddess was angry with me, she made me become ill.

The god whom I know or do not know has oppressed me;

The goddess whom I know or do not know has placed suffering upon me.

Although I am constantly looking for help, no one takes me by the hand;

When I weep they do not come to my side.

I utter laments, but no one hears me;

I am troubled; I am overwhelmed; I can not see.

O my god, merciful one, I address to thee the prayer, "Ever incline to me";

I kiss the feet of my goddess; I crawl before thee. (40)

(lines 41–49 are mostly broken and cannot be restored with certainty)

How long, O my goddess, whom I know or do not know, ere thy hostile heart will be quieted? (50)

Man is dumb; he knows nothing;

Mankind, everyone that exists,—what does he know?

Whether he is committing sin or doing good, he does not even know.

O my lord, do not cast thy servant down;

He is plunged into the waters of a swamp; take him by the hand.

The sin which I have done, turn into goodness;

The transgression which I have committed, let the wind carry away;

My many misdeeds strip off like a garment.

O my god, (my) transgressions are seven times seven; remove my transgressions;

O god whom I know or do not know, (my) transgressions are seven times seven; remove my transgressions;

O goddess whom I know or do not know, (my) transgressions are seven times seven; remove my transgressions.

Remove my transgressions (and) I will sing thy praise.

May thy heart, like the heart of a real mother, be quieted toward me;

Like a real mother (and) a real father may it be quieted toward me.

- Divine Revelation is a Gift. It is given of God, not attained by mankind through rationalism or empiricism. God decides to speak and therefore speaks (1 Cor. 2:9).

The Name of God:

- 1) In Exodus 3 God reveals His personal name and highlights His gracious and loving character to both make and keep His promises to His people (cf. Gen. 15 & Ex. 2:23-25).
- 2) In verse 13 Moses asks God, "what is your name?" Names not only encapsulated key characteristics of gods but also equipped someone to be able to invoke a particular god.

- 3) Cf. "Dagon" of the Philistines, "Shamash" of Mesopotamia... polytheists collected gods like trading cards or shopping for insurance... (cf. 2 Chron. 28:22-25; Jer. 44:15-18).
- 4) Additionally, the revealing of a divine name to a worshiper was seen as a gracious act of revelation & relationship.
- 5) Yet rather than simply accommodating Moses and giving him a name, God takes the time to describe Himself, before revealing His personal name.
- 6) God describes Himself with the phrase, "I AM THAT I AM," which can also be translated "I AM WHAT I AM, I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE, & I AM WHERE I AM," Or even the causative, "I cause to be."
- 7) *In other words, this simple phrase describes God as limitless in existence, power, time, space, and jurisdiction. God has no limitations, restrictions, imperfections, or shortcomings.*
- 8) After describing Himself in this way, God introduces His personal name with the words of v. 15.
- 9) God's "name," is also His "memorial," or how He wants to be known and remembered. God revealed His name as YHWH, which most scholars believe is a nifty way in Hebrew to abbreviate the phrase "I AM THAT I AM."
- 10) In other words, God wants Israel and all the world to know Him in His most fundamental characteristic, namely, that He exists self-sufficiently & limitlessly, that is, He is eternal & universal.
- 11) God exists as the infinite, eternal, personal, and moral first cause to the universe (Acts 17:28; Rev. 11:17). Nothing existed before God, and nothing exists apart from God. God is the fundamental reality to the entire universe.
- 12) By contrast, if we were to enshrine our basic nature in a name it would be, "we became." In other words, we began at a point of time, before which we did not exist. YHWH on the other hand is the self-existent, self-sustaining source of all life: the "I AM."

Excursus on Tetragrammaton:

- 1) Between the OT & NT eras, the name of God was treated as too sacred to be uttered. Thus, it was abbreviated or written “YHWH” as four consonants without vowel points. This four-letter sacred name is known as the “tetragrammaton” (Greek phrase meaning “four letters”).
- 2) Since antiquity scholars have debated on the exact pronunciation of the tetragrammaton. Ironically the exact pronunciation of this most important name of God has been lost to history.
- 3) The word “Jehovah” comes from a Latinized/Germanized form of these letters. Most modern scholars use the name “Yahweh” as the accepted pronunciation, which they arrive at by taking the vowels of “Adonai” and plugging them into the consonants YHWH. This scholarly consensus, however, is still far from certain.
- 4) Nonetheless YHWH is the personal name of God, which is also the most used name of God in the Scriptures. This is the name by which God most wants to be known, and the name with which we ought to become deeply acquainted.
- 5) This is the name that distinguished God from all other gods. The other titles such as god, lord, master, etc. are used of many deities in both antiquity and modernity. However, YHWH is the sacred, eternal, personal name of the One and True, Living God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

God Promises & Delivers (Ex. 3:16-22)

- 1) Exodus 3:16-22 goes on to reveal several other aspects of the character of YHWH.
- 2) In verse 20 God promises that the Exodus event will reveal His “wonders.”
- 3) “Wonders” is used primarily with God as its subject, expressing actions that are beyond the bounds of human powers or expectations. This idea is well expressed by the psalmist: “This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes” (Ps. 118:23).

- 4) This word is used almost exclusively to refer to miraculous acts of God dealing with deliverance. So, for example, the Lord's dividing of the Red Sea (Ps. 78:12–13), his leading Israel through the wilderness (Ps. 78:14–16) and his separating the waters of the Jordan (Josh. 3:5) are all considered 'wonders' of the Almighty.
- 5) When one adds up all of the "mighty deeds" of God throughout the scripture, it forms his miraculous resume and serves as God's grand revelation of himself.

Summary:

- 1) God makes and keeps promises (Ex. 3:6-10).
- 2) God reveals His eternality & self-existence in His name YHWH (Ex. 3:11-15).
- 3) God often works via wonders (Ex. 3:16-22).
- 4) God wants to be remembered for Who & What He is (Ex. 3:15).
- 5) God involves & equips humans in what He is doing (Ex. 3:10).

Implications:

- If all we had was our reason, our observations, and the logical arguments detailed earlier, we could conclude that there is a God. However, we would still not know whether he was a good God or a malevolent being. We would still not know Him unless He revealed Himself.
- The book of Exodus serves as a monumental leap forward in God's revelation of Himself to mankind. God demonstrates that He is a good, gracious, covenant keeping God, who works on behalf of His people.

Theology 101 (Session 3)

Psalm 139 - Basic Theology

Introducing the Psalms:

- Psalms are poetry rooted in history.
- Psalms are either prayers, songs, laments, or meditations, many of which are profoundly theological.
- The Psalms provide a 3D image of the life of David. While 1-2 Samuel tell us about the history around David, the Psalms help us see what David was thinking, feeling, and praying during that same history.

Psalm 139

- Meditation of David concerning the character of God.
- David ("the sweet psalmist of Israel") authored 75 [73 *attributed to David in the OT & 2 more attributed to him by the NT*] of the 150 Psalms.

Big Ideas from Ps. 139.

- 1) Omniscience (v. 1-6) we cannot deceive God.
- 2) Omnipresence (v. 7-12) we cannot escape God.
- 3) Imminence (v. 13-18) we cannot ignore God.
- 4) Justice (v. 19-24) we cannot dispute or refute God.

OMNISCINCE (Ps. 139:1-6)

- Verse 1, Like spies spying out the land, or like in mining exploration, God has "searched" us out and knows us completely. The word "know" appears 8x in this Psalm.
- Verse 2, God knows more than merely my actions, but my very thoughts, my fears, my pains, Ps. 56:8, 139:1-6; Proverbs 15:3. He even knows my thoughts afar off... That is before my thoughts even occur, (cf. Matthew 6:8).
- Verse 3-4, "Compass" (v. 3) can also be translated "winnow, search, or test," cf. Jeremiah 17:9-10; Isaiah 29:15. God knows me intimately and exhaustively including my actions, words, and even habits and character traits.

- “Hand” (v. 5) could also be translated palm, and it pictures cupping one’s hand around a bug on a table! God is so much bigger than us or our problems!
- Verse 6, David is overwhelmed at the very idea of the pervasive, inescapable, & all-encompassing knowledge of God!

Summarizing the Biblical Idea of Omniscience:

- 1) God knows all things (2 Chron. 16:9; Isa. 40:13; Rom. 11:34; Heb. 4:13; 1 John 3:20) & all needs (Matt. 6:8, 32), even the smallest physical things like the hairs on our head (Matt. 10:30) or the tears we have ever shed (Ps. 56:8).
- 2) There is no topic that he does not know, fully comprehend, or difficulty He can’t solve (2 Chron. 16:9; Isa. 40:13; Rom. 11:34; Heb. 4:13; 1 John 3:20).
- 3) God possesses comprehensive and intimate knowledge of humans (1 Kings 8:39; 1 Chron. 28:9; Pss. 44:21; 139:1–5; Luke 16:15), knowing people before they are conceived (Ps. 139:13–16; Jer. 1:5; Rom. 8:28–30; Rev. 13:8; 17:8), including the true heart character, intentions, meditations, and affections of men (1 Kings 8:39; Ps. 7:9; 139:2; Prov. 15:11; Jer. 11:20; 17:9–10; 20:12; Ezek. 11:5; Luke 16:15; Rom. 8:27; 1 Cor. 3:20; 1 Thess. 2:4; 1 John 3:20). God’s knowledge of men also includes our wickedness ((Ps. 69:5; Jer. 16:17; 18:23; 32:19)
- 4) Many biblical passages depict God as having detailed knowledge of the future decisions of humans (including evil decisions), sometimes portrayed as spanning centuries and thus including countless human decisions (Gen. 37:5–11; 40:12–22; 1 Kings 13:1–2; Isa. 44:28; Mark 14:27–30; John 13:18–19; cf. Gen. 15:13–16; Dan. 2; 7; 9).
- 5) Numerous passages teach that God possesses exhaustive foreknowledge—foretelling “the end from the beginning” (Isa. 41:22–26; 42:8–9; 43:9–12; 44:6–8; 46:9–11) and everything in between (Ps. 139:16; Isa. 41:21–23).

- 6) God even knows the days, and geographical limits ordained for each individual person & nation (Ps. 31:15; 39:4–5; 139:7–16; Job 14:5; Acts 17:26).
- 7) Notice how Matt. 11:21-24 highlights the idea that omniscience perceives even the realm of possibility. Jesus claimed that had His miracles been done in Sodom & Gomorrah they would have repented. However, they never in fact witnessed His miracles, nor did they repent. Yet Jesus was aware even of the possibility of their repentance had they witnessed those miracles... this helps round out our definition of omniscience.

Personal Applications for Divine Omniscience:

1) Omniscience and Security (Rom. 8:31-39)

- a) Nothing can ever come to light in the believer's life that would surprise God and cause Him to cast him out. "No talebearer can inform on us, no enemy can make an accusation stick; no forgotten skeleton can come tumbling out of some hidden closet to abash us and expose our past; no unsuspected weakness in our characters can come to light turn God away from us, since He knew us utterly before we knew Him and called us to Himself in the full knowledge of everything that was against us." (Tozer)
- b) "O blessed God, if there is any secret sin yet lurking in my soul, anything I have not sincerely renounced, show me and tear it out of my heart—even if it has shot its roots ever so deep, and wrapped them all around, so every nerve would be pained by the separation. Tear it away, Lord, by your graciously severe hand." (Philip Doddridge)
- c) "Divine omniscience affords no comfort to the ungodly mind, but to the child of God it overflows with consolation. God is always thinking upon us, never turns aside his mind from us, has us always before his eyes; and this is precisely as we would have it, for it would be dreadful to exist for a moment beyond the observation of our heavenly Father. His thoughts are always tender, loving, wise, prudent, far-reaching, and they bring to us countless

benefits: hence it is a choice delight to remember them."
(Spurgeon)

- 2) Omniscience and Sensitivity: Every warning God gives comes from an omniscient Being, so we should be extremely sensitive to them. He does not warn us on the basis of only guessing what might happen. He knows.
- 3) Omniscience and Solace (Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 1:3-4) When faced with those inexplicable circumstances in life we invariably take refuge and find solace in the omniscience of God. Not only does He know what actually happened, but He knows what might have happened. He always knows what ultimate good and glory will come from events which we cannot understand.
- 4) Omniscience and Sobriety: Sobriety ought to characterize all men when they realize that they must stand before an all-knowing God (Heb. 4:13).

OMNIPRESENCE (Ps. 139:7-12)

- 1) Compare v. 7 with Genesis 3... We naturally try to run from such vulnerability; we fear such naked exposure before God.
- 2) Heaven and hell (v. 8) form a mirrorism of up and down while verse 9 forms a mirrorism of east and west.
- 3) "Wings" (v. 9) picture early morning rays of the sun, alluding not only to location but also speed.
- 4) "Uttermost part of the Sea" (v. 9) still applies in modernity. As of 2019 the oceans, which make up 71% of the earth's surface, are still 80% unmapped, unobserved, and unexplored.
- 5) Omnipresence means that God is everywhere present with His whole being at all times.
- 6) As Edward Leigh observes, God is "neither shut up in any place, nor shut out from any place."
- 7) Omnipresence is unlimited by space (Ps. 139:8), undaunted by speed (Ps. 139:9), and unaffected by darkness (Ps. 139:11-12).
- 8) Omnipresence does not mean that God's being is diffused throughout the universe as if part of Him is here and part of Him there. His whole being is every place, and the presence of

the Lord within every believer serves as a good illustration of this.

- 9) Omnipresence does not mean that the immediacy of His presence does not vary. His presence can be concentrated on His throne (Rev. 4:2), in Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 7:2), or in the believer (Gal. 2:20).
- 10) Though in the lake of fire people will be separated from the face-presence of God (2 Thess. 1:9, *prosopon*), they will never be separated from Him who is omnipresent (Rev. 14:10, *enopion*). There is obviously no presence of fellowship as exists when He indwells believers for His face will be turned away from the wicked in the lake of fire.

Ramifications:

- No person can escape the presence of God. This reality warns unbelievers yet comforts believers, who can practice the experience of His presence in every circumstance of life.

IMMANENCE (Ps. 139:13-18)

- 1) God is Omnipresent, but also immanent. He is not aloof, detached, or disinterested in His creation.
- 2) The thought that darkness cannot conceal anyone from the Lord (vv. 11–12) brought to David's mind this meditation in verses 13–18: God knew all about him when He created him in his mother's womb (cf. "for" beginning of verse 13).
- 3) Being "covered" (v. 13) can also be translated knitted together (cf. Job 10:11). Note God's personal involvement in the cell divisions, telling each what kind of tissue to become.
- 4) Examination of creation brings adoration of Creator (v. 14). Rev. James Hufstetler said it well when he said, "You are the result of the attentive, careful, thoughtful, intimate, detailed, creative work of God. Your personality, your sex, your height, your features, are what they are because God made them *precisely* that way.
- 5) He made you the way he did because that is the way he wants you to be.... If God had wanted you to be basically and creatively different he would have made you differently. Your genes and chromosomes and creaturely distinctives-even the

shape of your nose and ears-are what they are by God's design."

- 6) "You will never really enjoy other people, you will never have stable emotions, you will never lead a life of godly contentment, you will never conquer jealousy and love others as you should until you thank God for making you the way he did." (Hufstetler)

THE JUST GOD (v. 19-22)

- 1) If we cannot deceive God, escape God, or ignore God, isn't it obvious that we ought to obey him? Yet some will still resist! So, David here prays for God to enforce justice.
- 2) The rejection of an all knowing all present all powerful and loving God is the most heinous crime in the universe. It is cosmic treason of the highest order!
- 3) Compare the thought flow to Deuteronomy 32:4-6. God formed and fathered us, yet we were rebellious sons!
- 4) An all powerful, inescapable God is scary unless He is also tempered by justice. The human experience teaches us that absolute power corrupts absolutely, yet God is the exception. He holds absolute power and authority, yet He wields it in complete justice and honor.
- 5) "*He is the Rock, his work is perfect: For all his ways are judgment: A God of truth and without iniquity, Just and right is he* (Dt 32:4).
- 6) "Therefore, hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: Far be it from God, *that he should do* wickedness; And from the Almighty, *that he should commit iniquity*" (Job 34:10).
- 7) No one will get away with evil... God's justice won't allow it. God will one day rectify ALL THINGS. NOTHING is outside the realm of His jurisdiction. No one can escape His mighty hand!
- 8) God can never be charged with wrong-doing. Whatever God allows to happen, He is absolutely just in allowing it.

A Charge Against Justice?

- 1) It is fashionable today to malign God's justice and call it unnecessary or even evil! Yet consider this.

- 2) Without order & justice, Joy and Hope would cease to exist. To merely “grant forgiveness” without due justice would unravel the universe. It would be the equivalent of simultaneously releasing every criminal back into the world without rehabilitation of any sort.
- 3) True justice involves both retribution & restitution yet allows for reconciliation as a result.
- 4) Retributive justice requires punishment of wrongdoer, restitution of victim, and rehabilitation of wrongdoer when possible.
- 5) The goal of this fall type of justice is restoration of the society as closest possible to the state it was before the wrong.
- 6) "Punishment implies responsibility for actions, and responsibility implies free agency. To shirk responsibility in order to avoid punishment is to deny basic humanity.
- 7) The image of God in man implies free agency and decision-making. To shirk responsibility and deny free agency is to put man on par with infants, imbeciles, and domesticated animals." (Stott)
- 8) To blame one's environment instead of personal responsibility for actions would imply that we should not arrest the criminal but arrest his neighbors!
- 9) Liberal theology says that God's demand for justice is contrary to love, but this merely shows an abysmal misunderstanding of the doctrine. Note Machen's quote below.
- 10) "Liberal's claim that it is a primitive view of God that represents him as being alienated from mankind because of our sin and coldly waiting until a price is paid before He grants salvation.
- 11) Yet they speak as if the sacrifice was made by someone other than God! In matter-of-fact God himself and not another made the sacrifice for sins. God assumed our nature and died in our place. God Himself, in the Person of the Father, spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all!
- 12) Salvation is as free for us as the air we breathe. He bore the dreadful cost. Love like this brings men to their knees in humble gratitude, and then to our feet in joyful service.
- 13) Cheap love, love without sacrifice, or forgiveness without cost, makes men strangely ungrateful. They take for granted the forgiveness they think they are owed! Is it really love that costs

so little? The depth of our joy and worship directly corresponds to the depth of His love and sacrifice!" Religion cannot be made joyful simply by looking on the bright side of God. We must look upon all his facets. God is love, but is love God?

- 14) God is found to be enveloped in impenetrable mystery, and awful righteousness. A sliver of God will not suffice. We must behold Him in His beauty. Only when we gaze upon every facet do we satisfy the longings of the human soul!

Practical Implications of David's Meditations (Ps. 139:23-24)

- 1) Affirm loyalty
- 2) Seek divine guidance
- 3) Submit to divine scrutiny
- 4) Follow divine path

Theology 101 (Session 4)

Psalm 145 - Praising God's Attributes

Introducing Psalm 145

- An alphabetic acrostic of David as he meditates upon God as the heavenly King with his subjects.

Structure of Ps. 145

- 1) The Person of God (v. 1-17)
 - a) The King (v. 1-8)
 - b) His Kingdom (v. 9-18)
- 2) The People of God (v. 18-21)

The Person of God as King:

- 1) God is praiseworthy (v. 1-2)
- 2) God is infinite (v. 3)
- 3) God is eternal (v. 4)
- 4) God is beautiful (v. 5) (striking beauty that evokes feelings of awe, delight, and admiration)
- 5) God is powerful (v. 6)
- 6) God is good (v. 7)
- 7) God is righteous (v. 7)

- 8) God is gracious (v. 8)
- 9) God is compassionate (v. 8)
- 10) God is patient (v. 8)
- 11) God is merciful (v. 8)

God is Infinite:

- 1) God cannot be contained (1 Kings 8:27).
 - 2) God cannot be fully represented (Dt. 4:15-19).
 - 3) God cannot be measured (Is. 40:12; 48:13; Job 11:7-9).
 - 4) God cannot even be fully imagined (Eph. 3:20; Is. 55:9).
- Creation is immense (unfathomable ocean or unreachable space), yet imagination is the realm beyond reality in which we can create the improbable and even the impossible. Yet we cannot think big enough to capture God!

God's Kingdom Consists of...

- God's Will
- God's Works

God's Kingdom invokes

- Awe because of its grandeur, beauty, sovereignty, and eternity.
- Loyalty because it is benevolent, compassionate, and charitable.

God's Kingdom Includes God's Works:

- His tender mercies are over all His works (v. 9)
- All His works praise Him (v. 10)
- All His works are holy & right (v. 17)

Defining Sovereignty:

- **Sovereignty** [deriv. of Latin, super above, regnum rule]
Supreme power, absolute supremacy, the possession of the highest power. Autonomous, all-powerful. Free from external control; having total dominion.

- To affirm that God is sovereign is to affirm that God reigns, universally and invincibly.

Considering Sovereignty:

- 1) God causes the sun—which Jesus calls *his* sun—to shine both on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45), which in turn causes the grass to grow and brings forth produce from the earth (Ps. 104:14).
- 2) He determines the lifespan of even the smallest of birds (Matt. 10:29) and provides food for the animals that roam his creation (Ps. 104:27; Matt. 6:26).
- 3) He determines the boundaries of nations (Acts 17:26) and rules over them (Ps. 22:28), removing and setting up kings (Dan. 2:21) and even turning their hearts wherever he wishes (Prov. 21:1).
- 4) That God turns their hearts indicates that he ordains even the desires and free choices of men, whether for good (Eph. 2:10) or for evil (Gen. 45:5–8; 50:20; 1 Sam. 2:25; 2 Sam. 24:1; Isa. 10:1–8).
- 5) Even seemingly random events are determined by God, for “the lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord” (Prov. 16:33).
- 6) Neither do the events of the personal lives of men escape God’s sovereign ordinance, for he supplies their every need (Phil. 4:19; James 1:17), determines the length of their lives (Job 14:5; Ps. 139:16), and even directs their individual steps (Prov. 16:9; Jer. 10:23).
- 7) Perhaps the greatest summary statement of the exhaustiveness of God’s decree comes in Paul’s doxology in Romans 11:36: “For from him and through him and to him are *all* things.”
- 8) Whether ends, means, contingencies, desires, choices, or even the good and evil actions of men, nothing escapes the providential governance of God’s decree.
- 9) Jerry Bridges observes, “It seems the more we come to believe in and accept the sovereignty of God over every event of our lives, the more we are tempted to question His love. We

think, “If God is in control of this adversity and can do something about it, why doesn’t He?”

- 10) In 1981 a widely acclaimed best-selling book swept the nation. In literary reviews Rabbi Harold Kushner’s book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, was described as touching, heart-warming, wise and compassionate, a book all humanity needs.
- 11) In the book, which is an attempt to make sense out of a tragedy in his own family, Rabbi Kushner concludes that the author of the book of Job “forced to choose between a good God who is not totally powerful, or a powerful God who is not totally good ... chooses to believe in God’s goodness.”
- 12) In Rabbi Kushner’s view of the teaching of Job, “God wants the righteous to live peaceful, happy lives, but sometimes even He can’t bring that about. It is too difficult even for God to keep cruelty and chaos from claiming their innocent victims.”
- 13) Rabbi Kushner chose to believe in a God who is good but not sovereign. Sometimes we are tempted, if only momentarily, to believe in a sovereign God who is not good. Satan, whose very first act toward man was to question the goodness of God, will even plant the thought in our minds that God is up in Heaven mocking us in our distress.”

A Constructive Model of Divine Sovereignty & Human Responsibility (Peckham)

- On one hand, numerous passages teach that God is sovereign and “accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will” ([Eph. 1:11](#)). On the other hand, numerous passages teach that creatures sometimes reject God’s will, refuse to listen, rebel against and reject God, and will otherwise than God desires ([Ps. 81:11–14](#); [Luke 7:30](#)). How are we to understand these two sets of texts? What reading consistently affirms both sets without injury to either of them?
- In my view, the Scriptural material indicates biblical warrant for the following points:

- 1) God is all-powerful (e.g., [Rev. 1:8](#)), yet God cannot do some things—God “cannot deny himself” ([2 Tim. 2:13](#)) or “be tempted by evil” ([James 1:13](#)).
- 2) God “does whatever he pleases [hāpēs]” ([Ps. 115:3](#)), yet creatures sometimes do that which does not please God; God’s people “chose [bāhar] what I did not delight [hāpēs] in” ([Isa. 65:12](#)).
- 3) God declares, “My purpose [‘ēṣâ] shall stand, / and I will fulfill my intention.... / I have planned, and I will do it” ([Isa. 46:10–11](#)). Yet God also refers to his people as “rebellious children, ... / who carry out a plan, but not mine; / who make an alliance, but against my will, / adding sin to sin” ([30:1](#); cf. [Hosea 8:4](#)).
- 4) God declares, “I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass” ([Isa. 46:11](#)), yet sometimes God’s people despised God’s words ([2 Chron. 36:16](#)) and “did not listen to [God’s] voice,” “would not submit to” God ([Ps. 81:11](#)), and “refuse[d] to listen / To the instruction of the LORD” ([Isa. 30:9](#) NASB; cf. [65:12](#); [Jer. 6:19](#)).
- 5) God’s providence is all-encompassing. God “accomplishes all things according to his counsel [boulē] and will” ([Eph. 1:11](#)), yet some creatures “rejected God’s purpose [boulē] for themselves” ([Luke 7:30](#); cf. [Isa. 30:15](#); [Matt. 23:37](#)) and resisted the Holy Spirit ([Acts 7:51](#)).
- 6) Those whom God foreknew, he predestined, and those he predestined, he called, justified, and glorified ([Rom. 8:29–30](#)). Yet sometimes God called his chosen people, but they did not answer ([Isa. 65:12](#); [66:4](#); cf. [Ps. 81:13](#)); God “called and they would not listen” ([Zech. 7:13](#) NASB). God desired to save them, but they “were not willing” ([Isa. 30:15](#) NASB; [Matt. 23:37](#)); some who were invited (kaleō, “called”) to God’s wedding feast refused the invitation, whereupon others were invited and chosen instead ([Matt. 22:1–14](#); cf. [Rom. 11:20–23](#)).
- 7) God declares, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy” ([Exod. 33:19](#), also quoted in [Rom. 9:15](#)). Yet God also declares, “The LORD waits to be

gracious to you” and “will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when he hears it, he will answer you” ([Isa. 30:18–19](#)).

- 8) Whereas God hardened Pharaoh’s heart ([Exod. 9:12](#)), Pharaoh is earlier said to have hardened his own heart ([8:15](#), [32](#)); God’s people “made their hearts like flint” ([Zech. 7:12](#) NASB); and the Holy Spirit exhorts, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, as on the day of testing in the wilderness” ([Heb. 3:7–8](#); cf. [Ps. 95:7–8](#)).
- 9) God is the potter and can do with the clay what he wills ([Rom. 9:21](#)), declaring, “Like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel” ([Jer. 18:6](#) NASB), yet he also declares, “If that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent” ([18:8](#) NASB; cf. [18:9–10](#)).
- 10) Paul speaks of “vessels [skeuos] of wrath prepared for destruction,” yet he also says that God “endured [such vessels] with much patience” ([Rom. 9:22](#) NASB) and elsewhere teaches that “if anyone cleanses himself ... he will be a vessel [skeuos] for honor” ([2 Tim. 2:21](#) NASB). Further, God “is patient ... not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance” ([2 Pet. 3:9](#); cf. [Rom. 10:21](#)), and God has “no pleasure [hāpēs] in the death of anyone” but calls people to “turn, then, and live” ([Ezek. 18:32](#); cf. [33:11](#); [1 Tim. 2:4](#)).
- 11) Scripture depicts many divine judgments as instances in which, in response to people’s decisions to reject God and serve the “gods” of the nations ([Judg. 10:6–16](#); cf. [Deut. 29:24–26](#)), God reluctantly withdraws his protection and “gives” them over to their enemies (e.g., [Judg. 2:13–14](#); [Ezra 5:12](#); [Neh. 9:30](#); [Ps. 106:41–42](#); [Jer. 38:18](#); cf. [Ps. 81:12](#)). Accordingly, God laments the excessive devastation Babylon inflicted and judges Babylon and her gods for it ([Jer. 51:24–25](#), [44](#); cf. [25:12–14](#); [50–51](#); [Zech. 1:15](#)).
- 12) On this understanding, God takes into account what creatures freely will but also acts in a way that greatly affects history, bringing about the most preferable outcome that is available without infringing on the free will of creatures.

The People of God: (v. 18-21)

- Call Upon Him (v. 18) cf. Dt. 6:4-15.
- Fear Him (v. 19)
- Love Him (v. 20)
- Praise Him (v. 21)

The Praise of God: (Ps. 145 uses 11 synonyms for praise)

1. Praise (halal), to shine make clear, boast.
2. Extol (rum), to hold high... noun = height.
3. Bless (barak), to kneel before, salute out of respect.
4. Praise (shabach), to loudly commend, triumph in.
5. Declare (nagad), to report, announce, expose.
6. Declare (saphar), write, recount, celebrate a story.
7. Speak (siyach), to ponder, muse upon, mutter.
8. Say (amar), to talk, answer, speak.
9. Utter (naba), gush out, emit an odor, express.
10. Sing (ranan), shout out musically.
11. Praise (yadah), hand, to extend hands in worship, or confess, that is, open the hand!

Praise & Adoration = Celebration (Roots of Music)

- 1) Music & Praise originates in God our Creator.
- 2) The beginning & end of the Bible is full of Praise (Job 38:7; Rev. 4-5).
- 3) The largest book in the Bible, the Psalms, is a hymnal.
- 4) Music in Western (Christian) Tradition: (Mangalwadi)
- 5) Ancient Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, & Paganism had little influence on music. They either totally neglected music, chanted mindless music for hypnotic effect, or promoted ecstatic music for sexual rites.

- 6) Yet the rich heritage of western music can be traced directly from Augustine, to Luther, to Bach & Mozart.
- 7) Augustine wrote a mammoth 6 volume work on music wherein he expounded a biblical theology of music, which originates from the orderly Creator, and has it purpose for the praise of that Creator.
- 8) Following Augustine's philosophy, Benedictine monks constructed the then most complex machine ever invented, the largest pipe organ in England consisting of 26 bellows & 400 pipes.
- 9) Martin Luther (AD 1483–1546) took the biblical-Augustinian philosophy of music out of the cloister and choir loft to Europe's masses.
- 10) Luther changed Europe because he found something worth singing about, something worth living for, and something worth dying for.
- 11) It takes barely five minutes to walk from the Bach house in Germany, to the house where Luther had lived as a student. Bach's Lutheran / Christian roots form the foundation for his later musical excellence.
- 12) For Bach, as for Luther, "true music" pursues as its "ultimate end or final goal . . . the honor of God and the recreation of the soul." Bach believed that music was a "harmonious euphony for the glory of God."
- 13) The height of music in western culture roots back to foundation of Biblical revelation. God's truth gives mankind something to celebrate.

Theology 101 (Session 5)

Isaiah 40 - "Behold your God!"

Introduction:

- Belief and trust in the existence of an **infinite, just, & personal** God is the basic essential knowledge required for a meaningful existence in this world.

Isaiah

- Ministered for nearly 60 years to the southern kingdom of Judah.
- Ministered during the reigns of five different kings (c. 740-680 B.C.).

Prince of the Prophets

- 1) Linked to the royal line.
- 2) Lengthy prophecies.
- 3) Largest vocabulary of any Biblical author.

Introducing Isaiah Chapter 40

- 1) Yet in chapter 39 of his book, Isaiah had the unsavory task of announcing the coming Babylonian captivity. Chronologically, Isaiah 39 is the first prediction to this horrendous episode in the history of Judah.
- 2) In light of this earth-shattering announcement, Isaiah had to reenforce Judah's confidence in their God.
- 3) So, in chapter 40, Isaiah challenges Judah with these words, "Behold, your God!"
- 4) He then launches into one of the most dramatic descriptions of God anywhere in the Bible.
- 5) Isaiah 40 in particular describes how Yahweh is able and willing to save Israel, unlike the impotent gods of the pagans. So, Israel is expectantly wait and trust in Yahweh!
 - a) Yahweh announces coming comfort v. 1-8
 - b) Yahweh assures both His willingness and ability to save, v. 9-24
 - c) Yahweh invites Israel to trust Him, v. 25-3

Comfort Announced (v. 1-8)

- B/c Judgment is over (v. 1-2)
- B/c God is coming (v. 3-8)

YHWH, Willing & Able (v. 9-24)

Verses 9-11

- YHWH will Shepherd His People.
- cf. Ps. 23; 78:51-54; Ezek. 34.

Verses 12-14

- Several rhetorical questions highlight that YHWH is able to Shepherd His people b/c He is infinite in size & power.

Gaining Perspective:

- 1) An estimated 100 billion stars exist in the Milky Way. Counting them at one per second, it would take us 2500 years to count them all.
- 2) Yet an estimated 100 billion galaxies exist beyond the Milky Way.
- 3) Over 100 million earths could fit inside our sun, yet our sun is only a medium sized star. Stars exist that are 1500 times larger than our sun.
- 4) The nearest star in our very average galaxy, Alpha Centauri, is 25,000,000 miles away.
- 5) The huge star Betelgeuse is 27,000,000 times larger than our sun. It would take fourteen 25,000,000-mile trips (the distance to Alpha Centauri) to travel the diameter of Betelgeuse.
- 6) Our solar system in relation to our galaxy is the equivalent of the size of a quarter to the size of the North American continent.
- 7) Yet God spans them with His hand, and names them in His memory!

YHWH is without Rival

- Before nations (v. 15-17)
- Before other gods (v. 18-20)

- Before mighty men (v. 21-24)

Trust YHWH (v. 25-31)

Verses 25-26

- Assert that YHWH is without Rival.

Verses 27-28

- Ask rhetorical questions highlighting the sovereignty, strength, and wisdom.

Verses 29-31

- Adds that God makes His limitless power available to frail and mortal men, who simply trust Him.
- So why not trust Him?!

Summarizing our Study

The Glory of the Lord (Is. 40:5)

- 1) Our view of God is the most important thing about us, and Isaiah does not want us to have an anemic view of God.
- 2) Isaiah here attempts to give a glimpse in the present of what we will behold in the future in order to inspire us to awe & action.
- 3) The glory of God is a big concept in Scripture, but it might be summarized from two angles.
 - a) Grasping God's Glory
 - b) Living for God's Glory

Grasping God's Glory:

- 1) There are basically two ways that we can speak of God's glory. First, God's essential glory represents the sum of his attributes, which together make him the "God of glory" (Acts 7:2). His glory, as Thomas Watson notes, is the "sparkling of the Deity."

- 2) Second, there is a glory ascribed to God in terms of what his creatures bring to him (1 Chron. 16:29). This latter glory has in view our praise, worship, obedience, and delight as we keep the name of the Lord holy in all that we do (Matt. 6:9).
- 3) "Glory" is not so much an attribute in and of itself, but the sum of all God's attributes. Every one of the divine perfections adds to the weightiness and the radiance of His glory.
- 4) The composite whole of all the attributes coming together in the Godhead increases the "theological density" of the divine Being or Essence. It irradiates Glory! (*McLachlan*)
- 5) "Glory" = *kavod* comes from the Hebrew root meaning "weight." Keeping in mind that Hebrew is a very concrete language, the abstract idea of glory, splendor, or honor, comes from the concrete idea of weight, or heaviness.
- 6) As an illustration from an agricultural/pastoral culture, where work was hard and food could be scarce, note the development of this idea. Someone that was physically heavy was considered wealthy, because they could afford that much food.
- 7) This same word could then be used metaphorically to refer to one's status, reputation, character, or significance. The heavier the better. Thus in reference to God as glorious is a description of respect. God is weighty in character, respect, and status.

Living for God's Glory:

- *Living for God's glory involves two primary angles, Personal Pursuit of Purpose, Enjoyment, Praise, & coming Glory, as well as Public Promotion of the Knowledge of God to others.*
- *These two aspects are well illustrated by 2 Thessalonians 1:10 and 1 Thessalonians 2:12.*

Personal Pursuit:

- 1) David desired to gaze upon the physical, visible presence of Yahweh and to marvel at its beauty & splendor. He is

probably alluding to the actual visible Shekinah glory of God located in the sanctuary in Ps. 63:2.

- 2) Gazing at this beauty is itself an act of worship and will fuel a proper attitude in worship! cf. Psalm 27:4; 63:2; 145:5.
- 3) *God's glory is not an impediment to our happiness or well-being... but is in fact to our benefit! We must learn to live up to our design.*
- 4) *God is most glorified in us when we are the most satisfied in Him (Piper)! We are happiest in worship! He who loses his life for Christ's sake actually finds it.*
- 5) *The greatest good in the universe is that men might know God truly and thus worship Him worthily--that is, that they might glorify God.*
- 6) *But the impulse of the fallen heart is to compromise God's majesty in order to exalt oneself to the throne of his/her own life.*
- 7) *There is no better corrective for this most wicked of all impulses than to immerse one's spirit in the Old Testament.*
- 8) *No page of the Old Testament has been rightly read if it does not drive the reader to his/her knees in humble and fearful and loving worship of the thrice-holy god of the Universe, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God whose name is Yahweh. (Bookman)*

Looking Forward to Glory:

- 1) When Christ returns we all will be changed (1 Cor. 15:51-52). We will put on incorruptibility. We will have a new tabernacle (2 Cor. 5:4), like unto His glorious body (Phil. 3:20-21).
- 2) In the resurrection we will be like unto the angels (Luke 20:34-36). The angels that sinned gave up their heavenly "tabernacle" (body?) (Jude 6).
- 3) So, when He appears we will also be clothed in light (like Him, cf. Matt. 13:43), and thus be physically able to approach Him, because we will be like Him.
- 4) These future realities are to promote present longing and loyalty (1 Thess. 2:12).

“When I stand before the throne
Dressed in beauty not my own;
When I see Thee as Thou art,
Love Thee with unpinning heart;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know-
Not till then - how much I owe.”
(Spurgeon)

Appendix: The Names of God

Introduction:

- One of the greatest ways to learn of God, come to know Him, and thereby learn to trust Him is by surveying the names of God. A name in the Bible is always more than a mere label, it is also a description, a way to capture a characteristic or attribute. God labels or describes Himself in hundreds of ways in the Bible. Surveying these various names and descriptions of God affords us the opportunity to learn to fear Him, love Him, and trust Him the way we ought.

- Furthermore, we must learn to adore God in ALL of His facets. We must not create a god of our own making by exalting certain characteristics of God while ignoring others. A proper and profound view of God is the ultimate antidote for sin.

Categorizing the Names of God

- 1) Fundamental Names
- 2) Transcendent Names
- 3) Fearsome Names
- 4) Faithful Names
- 5) Intimate Names

- Fundamental Names: Elohim, YHWH, Adonai, El-Shaddia, El & Qadosh Yisrael.
- Transcendent Names: El Chai, El HaGadol, El Shammayim, El Elyon, Atik Yomin, Melekh HaGoyim, Basilei ton Aionon, Basileus Basileon, Despotes, Shaphat, Theos Monos Sophos.
- Fearsome Names: El Kanna, Akal Esh, YHWH Gibbor Milchamah, El Gibbhor, Elohim Yare.
- Faithful Names: El Hane'eman, El Sela, Migdol Oz, Alpha & Omega.
- Intimate Names: Elohim Shama, Elohim Qarob, Immanuel, YHWH Ezra, YHWH Uzzi, El Yeshuati, Elohay Selchot, YHWH Jireh, El Roi, Elohim Ahavah, El Racham, YHWH-Goel, Abba & Avinu.

Fundamental Names

- We have already discussed the names “Elohim” & “YHWH” above. So, we will examine Adonai, El-Shaddia, & El Qadosh Yisrael.

ADONAI

- “Lord” in our English Bibles, with a capital letter ‘L’; lower case, ‘ord.’ Adonai is plural, the singular form is “adon,” which means, “Master” or “Lord.” This title appears over 300 times in the OT, and is always plural when referring to God (recall the plural of majesty). Yet when used in the singular this title refers to a human lord, and appears 215 times to referring to men.

“Adonai” first surfaces in Gen. 15:2, which is translated in the KJV as “Lord GOD.” This English translation is meant to evidence that the Hebrew behind it is “Adonai YHWH,” thus the word Adonai is translated “Lord,” while the name YHWH is translated “GOD” in all capitals.

- The Hebrew word ADONAI: “Lord,” is connected to the root “aden,” which means base, socket, or pedestal, and appears in the Bible a few times translated either as “pillar” (S.O.S. 5:15), or “foundation” (Job 38:6), or “socket” (Ex. 26:19, 21). This root communicates the ideas of strength, a firm foundation, or being exalted and thrust up high atop an ornate pillar. The ideas of might, strength, exaltation, and high status all apply to this term. Thus the term appropriately came to refer to one who is exalted and exercises authority and control over others. As we will see, several other titles also communicate ideas similar to this.
- When the sacred name of God was considered too sacred to use, the Hebrew people substituted it with the word “Adonai.” This practice remains today in many Jewish circles, thus making Adonai one of the most used names for God, not only within the Bible, but especially outside the Bible within the Jewish world.
- Inherent in this title are the ideas of sovereignty, rulership, and honor, and thus it became a title of profound respect, and acknowledgement of God’s position and power. This is why Abraham addressed God in this way in Genesis 15.

EL SHADDAI:

- “God Almighty” or “God All Sufficient.” 48 times in the OT, 31 times in Job alone. It is first used in Gen. 17:1, 2, as God addresses Himself to Abraham. In Rev. 16:7, “Lord God the Almighty.” The Septuagint uses Greek “ikanos” meaning “all-sufficient” or “self-sufficient,” while the Latin Vulgate uses the word “omnipotens,” which is where we get our word “Omnipotent.” Other key passages that use this title are Gen. 31:29, 49:24, 25; Prov. 3:27; Micah 2:1; Isa. 60:15, 16, 66:10-1; Ruth 1:20, 21.

- A second possibility, and this is the most widely accepted today, is that šadday is to be connected with the Akkadian word, sadu “mountain.” Thus, El Shaddai would translate into English something like “God/El of the mountain,” i.e. God’s abode.
- Yet to what mountain might this refer? The most obvious choice would perhaps be Mt. Sinai. In other words, YHWH may have been associated with Mt. Sinai throughout history, even in the time of Abraham. Another suggestion, however, is that this title is reminiscent of the garden of Eden, which in Ezekiel 28:14 is called “the mountain of God.” Recall from some of our earlier studies that the garden of Eden was probably originally located in an elevated place, perhaps even the top of a mountain.
- The mountain imagery surrounding the garden of Eden perhaps helps us explain a number of correlations throughout both the Bible and history, namely, how pantheons of gods throughout the pagan world are often portrayed as being atop mountains. This is probably the primary purpose behind the building of the Tower of Babel, as well as later OT references to worshiping gods on “the high places.” The idea is that the gods lived in the heavens, yet when they descended to meet with men, they tended to touch earth atop mountains. Thus, mountains were considered sacred by nearly every ancient culture we are aware of, including Mesopotamian, European, Asian, and ancient American cultures.
- Mountain imagery pervades the Bible. Not only is the garden of Eden called “the mountain of God,” but God also later associates Himself with Mt. Sinai, and later with Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. In addition to this, multiple passages from Isaiah 2; Micah 4; & Zechariah 14 all highlight the fact that the city of Jerusalem will be exalted in the final days. Many believe this refers to a symbolic position of exaltation, yet others believe we ought to read this literally as referring to elevation.
- How was God Known Historically? These various quotes demonstrate the various views...

- “The patriarchs really did not know the name Jehovah, because it had not been revealed to them. It was revealed first to Moses at the burning bush. Perhaps the greatest evidence is that in the Old Testament, many names incorporate shortened forms of the name of God (most often Yah), but these shortened forms are not found in popular names before the time of Moses. The only possible exception might be Jochebed, Moses’ mother.⁶ Some would point out that the older portions of the Pentateuch (especially the book of Genesis) often use the name Jehovah, but that is easily explained by Moses’ authorship of the book. He used the name that had been given to him as a way of saying that the God of the patriarchs actually was Jehovah, even saying that the God of the patriarchs actually was Jehovah, even though the patriarchs did not know him by that name” (Boice).
- The promise of a coming exodus and redemption from slavery was not fulfilled during the time of the patriarchs but belonged to the distant future. The fact that the name Yahweh was made known to the Hebrews in the time of Moses meant that fulfilment was now imminent. (Currid)
- Moses and Israel (and even the Egyptians later) would shortly know what “I am the LORD” means. This would not be the first instance of the use of that name, for already it had occurred some 162 times in Genesis, with 34 of those examples on the lips of speakers in Genesis. Significantly, men “began to call on the name of the LORD [Yahweh]” as early as Genesis 4:26; and the place where he almost sacrificed Isaac, Abraham named “The LORD Will Provide [Yahweh-Yireh]” (Gen 22:14). Similarly, the names Jochebed and Joshua are theophoric, i.e., have Yahweh elements in them. It is difficult to claim these all are later modernizations for the older name of God. (Kaiser)

- After reassurance from the LORD, there comes a strange speech in 6:2–3. At first glance this looks as if the Name Yahweh was unknown to everybody before this point. This is definitely not the case as the Name Yahweh is known by the very earliest humans—Genesis 4:1 & 26. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all use the name ‘Yahweh’ (LORD) in the book of Genesis. The simplest explanation seems to be the way the verse has been translated. In the NIV translation there is a footnote which acknowledges the alternative, and much more reasonable, translation: “by my Name the LORD did I not make Myself known to them?” (Blackham)

El Qadosh Yisrael

- “God, the Holy One of Israel.” This title appears 31 times in the OT, yet 26 times in the book of Isaiah alone. “The Holy One” may also be translated “the Unique One,” or “the One of a Kind God of Israel.” Read 2 Kings 19.
- This idea is also clearly communicated in many passages such as Ex. 15:1, Micah 7:18, and others. This title for God specifically and directly associates the Creator of the universe with the nation of Israel. The God who created Israel, predicted her future, and steers her destiny is none other than the Creator of us all.
- Isaiah mentions the title, “Holy One of Israel,” at both the beginning of this section (1:4) and at the end (5:19, 24). This inclusio suggests Isaiah’s attention to the notion of holiness and specifically God’s holiness offended. Moreover, the repeated use of this appellation in close proximity builds a crescendo effect toward Isaiah’s vision (5:19, 24). Israel has repeatedly violated God’s holiness, and they are now going to meet him in Isaiah’s vision. (Chou)

Recall the Fundamental Purposes of God

1. God’s Grand Purpose in the Beginning was to Glorify Himself by Creating Mankind in His Own image.

2. But Mankind Rebelled & Refused to Live beneath the Righteous Rule of God (Gen. 3).
 3. Although God promised a Deliverer (Gen. 3:15), Mankind Remained in Rebellion.
 4. God Evidenced His Power & Justice First with the Flood (Gen. 6-9), then with the Tower of Babel (Gen. 10-11), but Mankind Still Rejected Him.
 5. God then Selected Abraham (Gen. 12) & promised to Abraham Many Descendants, who would become a Nation with a Specific Land.
 6. God Chooses to Create a New Nation for Two Reasons: First, to Bring the Promised Deliverer into the World (Gen. 3:15; Isaiah 9, 11), & Second, to Use the History of that Nation to Declare Himself to the World (Gen. 12:3; Ex. 19:5-6).
 7. Therefore, God is going to put Himself on Display to the World through the Drama of History! The People of Israel are the Props, the Land of Israel is the Stage.
- Recall our study of Biblical Geography. God's purpose to reveal Himself to the world through the history of the nation of Israel was facilitated by God's strategic choice of the land of Israel, which serves as the crossroads of the three continents of Europe, Africa, & Asia. This was not accidental nor incidental, but rather both intentional and strategic. Since the inception of the nation of Israel, the One and True living God has been associated with that nation. God's reputation is tied to the history of Israel as a nation. His name rises and falls based upon whether His threats and promises toward Israel succeed or fail (Rom. 9:4-5).
 - These ideas are what we primarily explored during our series, "Patterns of Prophecy, the Supernatural History of Israel." Because the Creator has associated Himself with the nation of Israel, that nation is often hated by the world in general, and false religions in particular. Because all false religions ultimately trace back to a common Satanic source, they all commonly oppose God's people [See especially Revelation 12]. Yet God will triumph in history by keeping His promises to

Israel and thereby demonstrating all the various aspects of His character.

Transcendent Names:

El Chai

- “The living God” appears 30 times in the Bible. The first occurrence is after God appears to Israel on Mt. Sinai, and they respond, “Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?” (Dt. 5:23)
- The next context in which this title appears is Joshua 3, where Joshua encourages the nation of Israel by saying that they need not fear, because the living God is in their midst, and God will drive out the inhabitants of Canaan.
- This title often appears in famous Bible stories, where God acts conspicuously to provide deliverance for His people. Examples include David and Goliath (1 Sam. 17:26, 36), the Invasion of Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:4, 16; Isaiah 37:4, 17), and Daniel in the lion’s den (Dan. 6:20, 26).
- This title emphasizes the idea that God lives and moves, sees and speaks, acts and accomplishes. The title “Living God” often contrasts the impotent gods of the nations, who have eyes but can’t see, ears but can’t hear, and mouths but can’t speak (Psalm 115, 135).
- This title not only communicates the idea that God can see, hear, and act, but it also emphasizes the idea of God’s self-existent, inherent life. John 1:4 states that “in Him was life...” Not THROUGH him, but IN HIM. He is the source of all life! In other words God does not need life from a preexisting source like we do. Nor does His life require outside energy to sustain itself. By contrast, God is the source of all living things. This marvelous reality is not merely the attribute of the Father, but also the Son. Jesus Himself possesses inherent life, and thus has the power and authority to grant life to all who follow

Him. “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (Jn. 6:51).

- The term here, אֱלֹהִים חַי, “living God,” occurs only four times in the OT: in Josh 3:10; Pss 42:2 [Hb. 3]; 84:2 [Hb. 3]; and Hos 1:10 [Hb. 2:1]. The term “my living God” (or “the God of my life” [NIV]) is found in Ps 42:8 [Hb. 9]. In the three Psalms passages, death or estrangement from God lurk in the background, and the “living God” is a source of life for the psalmists. Variations of אֱלֹהִים חַי are אֱלֹהֵינוּ (2 Kgs 19:4, 16 // Isa 37:4, 17), אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַיִּים (Deut 5:23; 1 Sam 17:26, 36; Jer 10:10; 23:36), and אֱלֹהֵינוּ חַיִּים (Dan 6:20, 26 [Aram 6:21, 27]). In the case of each of these variant forms, the “living God” is contrasted with hostile pagan gods or forces. (Howard)

El HaGadol

- “The Great God” (Deut. 10:17; 1 Chron. 16:25-27; Jer. 32:18). A few dozen historic figures throughout history have attached the adjective “great” to their name, intending to memorialize some great feat or contribution they made to history. Cyrus the Great, Alexander the Great, Antiochus the Great, Herod the Great, Constantine the Great, Catherine the Great, Charles the Great, etc. Taking on these sort of titles implied they thought to place themselves in a unique category, worthy of special honor and attention. Yet ironically, we have to look up most of these names. Why? Because we do not know who most of them are!
- Yet God on the other hand is well known to history. God has left His mark. He has not faded from the scene. Moses speaking to the second generation of Israelites, who came out of Egypt stated, “For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: ¹⁸ He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment” (Dt. 10:17). In another place David sprang into resplendent praise with these words, “For

great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: He also is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the people are idols: But the Lord made the heavens. Glory and honour are in his presence; Strength and gladness are in his place” (1 Chron. 16:25-27).

El HaShamayim & El Elyon

- Most cultures from the ancient near east, the far east, and Europe viewed their gods as territorial, that is, limited in both power and jurisdiction. Understanding and respecting the vast array of pantheons was difficult and even daunting. Traveling caravans in particular bore the brunt of this task as they moved from territory to territory in which the gods, customs, and taboos constantly shifted. The gods of Egypt were different than the gods of Canaan, which were different than the gods of Mesopotamia, etc. These various pantheons were always vying for devotees, adherents, and reverence. Yet one God distinguishes Himself above them all.
- The title El Elyon, “Most High God” occurs 11 times in the Bible. The first appearance is in Genesis 14, where Melchizedek is described as the priest of “El Elyon, the possessor of heaven and earth.”
- The title El HaShamayim, “God of the heavens” occurs 24 times in the OT, and served as a sort of short hand for the above title.
- The primary ideas behind these titles are sovereignty & universal jurisdiction. Recall that Genesis 14 is written in the wake of the Tower of Babel, where false gods and false worship originated. In other words, the One and True Living God of Abram and Melchizedek ought be recognized as the Most High God. He has no rivals.
- Though God’s claim to be “God Most High, possessor of heaven AND earth” was indeed challenged, He spent much of Biblical history defining and defending that claim, not only to pagans, but also toward His own people.
 1. Melchizedek, Abram, and King of Sodom (Gen 14)
 2. Rahab (Josh 2:11)
 3. Jonah (Jonah 1:9)

4. Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:18, 19, 28, 37, 44)
 5. Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-4)
 6. Demoniac of Gadara (Mark 5:7)
 7. Demoniac Slave girl (Acts 16:17)
- The title “God of Heaven” appears 24 times in the OT, but 19 of those appearances occur within the post-exile books. The books of Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah use this title the most. Why?
 - Recall the historic context of which they are a part. The Babylonian exile serves as the largest theological crisis of the OT. If YHWH is the most powerful God, than why has He failed? Why are His people conquered and sent into exile? These questions haunted the OT Israelite. So what was God’s answer? In short, God’s answer was two-fold.
1. Prophecy: God foretold of these events before they happened, in order to demonstrate that these events are NOT OUTSIDE His control, rather they are ORCHESTRATED by Him! See especially Isaiah 40-48 & Jeremiah 25 & 29. These prophecies are what the book of Ezra directly call our attention to (Ezra 1:1-4).
 2. Power-play: the book of Daniel evidences a number of miracles such as the fiery furnace and the lions den. Why? In order to demonstrate that the “gods” of Babylon are nothing to be compared with the “GOD” of Israel!
- Note how these ideas are especially highlighted in the book of Daniel...

Atik Yomin, “Ancient of Days”

- Note Daniel’s Vision of the “Ancient of Days” (Dan. 7:9, cf. Isaiah 43:13).
- This title emphasizes the antiquity of God and implies that God existed even before time itself existed.
- Contrast the modern idolization of youth with the ancient’s emphasis on experience.

- Isaiah 3 heralds leadership by youth as a sign of decay within a culture, and thus judgment upon that culture.
- Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel depicts God as a gray haired, muscled up old man, who like Moses or Caleb, possesses wisdom, while also retaining great strength.
- Note also how Micah 5:2 describes the Messiah as one "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." The vision of Jesus in Revelation 1 harkens back to this.
- Few images in antiquity would conger up more awe and respect than an omnipotent sage.

Melek HaGoyim "King of the Nations" & Basileus Basileon "King of kings" are both secular and sacred titles.

- Compare 2 Kings 17:31 where the gods of Sepharvaim have the word "melech" attached to their name.
- Like earthly kings, these gods were considered sovereign kings within their own territory, but not in another.
- Compare the Moabite Stone and other ancient inscriptions indicating that gods could go to war with other gods to increase their territory (Num. 21:21-30; Judges 11:24; 1 Kings 20:23; Jer. 49:1-3).
- Yet these wars between the gods also had political implications.
- The title "king of kings" could also be a secular title: Nebuchadnezzar (Ezek. 26:7; Dan. 2:37), or Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:12).
- Yet YHWH is not merely king in Israel, but He is king of ALL NATIONS (Psalm 22:28; Jer. 10:7), who set His throne in the heavens (Ps. 103:19), & sends His prophetic delegates to whom He wills.
- Deut. 28:13,36,44; Neh. 9:36-37 state that YHWH would at times allow other nations to rule over Israel in order to punish them.
- On the other hand, Isaiah 26:12-14 foresaw a day when YHWH would overthrow those rulers and grant peace to Israel.
- The book of Revelation is all about King YHWH once again enforcing His sovereignty.

- Revelation is in many respects a game of thrones, where God's throne in heaven (Rev. 4-5, 11), descends to earth (Rev. 19-22), in order to displace and overcome the throne of Satan (Rev. 13).

Basilei ton Aionon "King Eternal" (1 Tim. 1:17)

- Lious XIV, "the sun king," ruled for a total of 72 years! His long, prosperous reign made France the envy of the world at the time.
- No nation is more vulnerable than during a transition in leadership. Civil war, revolts, and coups are the norm.
- Rome experienced this throughout her long history. Conspicuous moments include Julius Caesar & the Year of the Four Emperors.
- Yet what if we experienced the eternal rule of an all-powerful, benevolent Monarch? Prosperity would have no end!
- After the age of revolution (17-1900s), history saw either the overthrow or severe limitation of every major monarchy around the globe.
- The rise of democracy sought to empower the people and overcome the traditional abuses of power among monarchies.
- The ideals of the modern era harken back to King Arthur and his roundtable, where all are equal. Even modern U.N. seating arrangements are supposed to signal this.
- Yet these modern ideas are confronted by the reality that there exists One King, who will never have an equal. He will always sit enthroned as supreme.
- Yet the ultimate monarch, who never fades, weakens, or grows old is Yahweh!
- YHWH is "The King Eternal" (1 Timothy 1:17). His eternal rule ensures all his promises and threats will always come to pass (Deut. 33:27; Ex. 15:18).
- There is no democratic vote for ruler of the universe! God's role as king is not up for grabs. God didn't get elected, nor can He be deposed. God is king eternally and timelessly.
- The term "king" or "reign" were only used of YHWH after the Exodus when the theocracy was about to be set up. Ex. 15:8 is

the first use. This signals that YHWH truly succeeded in the battle between He and Pharaoh over the people of Israel! Cf. Dt. 33:5.

- The New Testament develops this concept in greater detail, especially with the added emphasis on God's people sharing his reign (2 Tim 2:12; Rev 20:4, 6; 22:5; cf. Dan 7:18). The unstoppable, uninterrupted, eternal reign of God is a widely represented topic within the Bible (e.g., Pss 10:16; 45:6; 48:14; Heb 1:8; Rev 1:18; 11:15) and an assurance to all who place their faith in him. (Stuart)

Despotes "Absolute Monarch" (Rev. 6:10)

- Acts 4:24; 2 Peter 2:1; Jude 4; Rev. 6:10 all use the term Despotes [Greek], i.e. "one who holds complete power or authority over another," "owner, or possessor," who wields "unconditional" & "unlimited authority or power."
- This type of lop-sided relationship, where one person possesses all power, occurred between masters and their slaves, kings and their subjects, and of course the Creator and His creatures.
- Absolute monarchies have a long and sorted history. An absolute monarchy is when the king holds all the power, and is therefore able to legislate, adjudicate, and enforce laws without consulting anyone else [e.g. France under Louis XIV].
- Contrast this with a constitutional monarchy, where a system of laws is above the king, and the king Himself must adhere to them [see modern England].
- God is the ultimate Despot! No power or authority exists above Him.
- God creates laws, interprets those laws, and enforces those laws (see Isaiah 33:22). No court exists higher than God, which leads us to His next title.

Shaphat, "Judge" (Gen. 18:25)

- Kings, especially absolute monarchs, possessed the ultimate power over life and death (Prov. 16:10-15).

- Kings with absolute power served as the high court for the land, because no greater power existed beyond the king.
- This is a scary thought when a flawed human ruler holds absolute power.
- However, when a simultaneously all-wise, all-powerful, and all-holy God wields this power, it provides a sense of comfort.

Resting in the Justice of God

- In *Why I Am Not a Christian*, skeptic Bertrand Russell admitted that the primary reason he couldn't believe Jesus was because he believed in hell and taught about it "in one verse after another . . . again and again." Russell called Christ's belief in the wrath of God "the one serious defect in Christ's moral character."
- But we can't remove God's wrath from the Bible. And if we properly understood it, we wouldn't want to remove it. It's an essential part of God's goodness.
- Read Exodus 34:1-7 carefully. God's wrath is a natural extension of his love.
- Miroslav Volf, a survivor of the oppression and genocide in Croatia, said that when you watch family and friends murdered in front of you, the only way to keep from going insane is to know that there is a God who is angry at what is happening and will one day restore justice.
- If your God doesn't possess the ability to feel wrath, he says, you will seethe with an insatiable desire for vengeance. Only when you believe that God has the sword in his hand can you lay it down from your own.

- Furthermore, when you truly love something, you hate whatever destroys it. When you love the cancer victim, you hate the cancer destroying her body.
- Sin, like a cancer, ruins God's good creation and destroys any chance of a relationship with him. So God hates it.
- Deep down, we long for a place where there is no more evil, (Rev 21:4). Yet wrath is a necessary part of the path to get us there.
- God is righteously angry at sin, but he's not short-tempered. He waits patiently, heartbroken and longing for our repentance. (2 Pet 3:3–9).
- The reality of God's coming justice is what allows us to have present comfort amidst extreme injustice.
- 1 Peter 2:23 notes that the reality of God's future judgment is what comforted Jesus in the present. It is the same way for us.

Greear, J. D., & Jeremiah, D. (2018). [Not god enough: why your small god leads to big problems](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Fearsome Names:

YHWH Sabaoth (1 Sam. 1:3)

- The title "LORD of Hosts," first appears in 1 Sam 1:3, then occurs 19x in historic books, 62x in Isaiah, 77x in Jeremiah, and is densely used in Post-Exile Prophets.
- Sabaoth [i.e. Hosts] refers to a large number of something such as stars (Gen. 2:1 & Neh. 9:6), armies (Ex. 12:17, 41), or angels (1 Kings 22:19).
- The Hebrew saba, which is used of the stars, seemingly connotes angels in 1 Kings 22:19; 2 Chr. 18:18; Ps. 103:21, and Ps. 148:2. Most commentators understand the Hebrew to

demote the armies of heaven (Ps. 89:6; I Sam. 17:45).
(Burggraff)

- This title pictures YHWH as the Mighty Warrior King, who rules his heavenly army (1 Kings 22 & 2 Kg 6).
- YHWH also rules over Israel's army (1 Sam. 17:45)
- YHWH even rules over foreign armies like Assyria, Babylon, or Persia (Isaiah 10; 13:4, 17,19).
- All cultures, especially cultures of the A.N.E., respect the Warrior King Image.
- Warriors are an essential part of any society (Isaiah 3:2), because every society experiences dangers & threats.
- Warriors who distinguish themselves are hailed as heroes.
- What greater threats do we have than sin, death, and evil?
- Because evil exists, we MUST have a warrior. Praise God we have this warrior in Him!

YHWH Gibbor Milchamah

- Psalm 24:8 describes God as YHWH Gibbor Milchamah, “the LORD Mighty in Battle.” Psalm 24 was penned by David, who was adept at the art of war, who had personally experienced God's mighty delivering hand.
- Note the special promises God granted Israel concerning war (Deut. 7:17-26; 20:1-4; 28:7)
- Note how the history of Israel saw those promises play out (Josh. 5-6).
- The point of these promises and their fulfillment is to declare to the world that YHWH is undeniably unbeatable, indefatigable, unconquerable, and triumphant. When choosing a side, don't oppose YHWH GIBBOR MILCHAMAH!

Akal Esh & El Qanna (Deut 4:24)

- Read Exodus 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; Heb. 12:29. Accompanying God's descent upon Mt. Sinai, and His declaration of the Decalogue, God declares Himself to be both Akal Esh & El Qanna, i.e. “a Consuming Fire” & “a Jealous God.”

- Later, as God reveals Himself specifically to Moses atop Mt. Sinai in Exodus 34, He again enshrines Himself with this name “El Qanna.”
- Many modern readers recoil at such titles. Isn’t God supposed to be a warm fire to cuddle up to, instead of a raging inferno to flee from? Isn’t jealousy a bad thing? How can these titles be rectified with the idea that God is a God of love?
- The motif of fire is often associated with God’s presence whenever He reveals Himself (Gen. 3:23; 15; Ex. 3; 13; 19; 24; 40; Lev. 9-10; Num. 16; Ezek. 1). The question is “in what way is God like fire, or fire like God”?
- On the one hand, fire is warm, inviting, life giving, & beautiful.
- Yet on the other hand, fire is dangerous, destructive, & not to be toyed with.
- Ezek. 1:4 describes the appearance of God to Ezekiel as “fire enfolding itself,” i.e. engulfing itself, flashing, shining, blazing, gleaming, shimmering, glistening (allusion to perpetual energy?)
- Probably the equivalent of what Moses saw at the burning bush, which was ablaze with light (Ex. 3).
- The flames of fire indicate the barrier between heaven and earth, the barrier established in Genesis 3:23 when Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden. We will see this fiery boundary between heaven and earth many times in the book of Exodus ... and in the rest of the Bible. (Blackham)
- Biblically God is Jealous over two things:
 1. His own glory
 2. His own people
- “Jealousy” properly defined is “envy over someone else’s possessions, position, or accomplishments.” However, God is not at all envious over the status of another. He is only envious over His own.
- Psalm 96:8 declares, “Give unto the LORD the glory DUE UNTO HIS NAME.”
- God is also jealous over us. We are HIS property twice-owned by both creation & redemption, i.e. construction & conquest.

- God made us and purchased us, He refuses to give us over to another god!

El Yare “Awesome God” (Deut. 28:58)

- “Awesome” is a word often used and watered down in modern vocabulary. Yet the Hebrew equivalent is the adjective that trumps all other adjectives. The Bible reserves this word for things truly jaw-dropping.
- This word is meant to describe a fall on your face speechlessness, hug the ground terror, or a take your breath away wonder.
- This is the type of response Jacob had upon awaking from his awesome dream (Gn. 28:16-17).
- This is the response God intended Israel to have as they witnessed His mighty deeds throughout their history whether in divine blessing or divine judgment (Deut. 28:58).
- Perhaps you have experienced that sense of smallness and awe when beholding a natural disaster, feeling the reverberation of a lightning strike, or watching a meteor stream across the sky. Yet if these created things are glorious, the Creator is infinitely more-so!
- This is the response we will one day experience as we behold God in His beauty.
- Note Isaiah 24:21-23 & 2 Thess. 1:3-10.

Faithful Names:

El Tzur (Deut. 32:4)

- The Hebrew word “tzur” occurs 7x in the Song of Moses (Dt. 32), as either a title for YHWH the God of Israel, or as a reference to false gods of the nations [Sela =synonym]. This common idiom for deity communicates the ideas of permanence, reliability, security, & refuge.
- This metaphor pictures God as a rocky, relatively inaccessible summit, where one would be able to find protection from

enemies. See [1 Sam 23:25, 28](#)... My stronghold. David often found safety in such strongholds. See [1 Sam 22:4-5; 24:22; 2 Sam 5:9, 17; 23:14](#). (NET)

- Rocks were places of refuge like a shadow in a weary land (Is. 32:2), places of refuge from dangerous predators (Ps. 104:18), or perhaps containing a spring of water in the wilderness like Ex. 17:6, or En-Gedi (1 Sam. 24:1-2).
- This title for God appears throughout the Bible in both narrative and poetic sections (1 Sa. 2:2; 2 Sam. 22:32, 47; 23:3), especially in the words of David, who often took refuge in the rocks (1 Chron. 11:15; Psalm 18; 27; 28; 62 etc).
- The word Stone occurs in several important passages. In the OT, God is often called a Rock (e.g., Deut 32:4, 15, 18; Ps 18:2; 61:2), usually with implications of shelter and refuge. In Is 8:14-15 the prophet turns this familiar figure against the rebellious people. God the Rock is for his people who trust him but against those who refuse to believe, becoming a boulder to trip over in the darkness of sin. In Is 28:16-17 God promises to lay a tested (or testing) stone in Zion, again for faith. In Is 32:1-2 the (messianic) King becomes, in effect, a rock of refuge for his people. See the comments on all three passages. So God has committed to the coming One the function of sheltering his people who trust him. (Grogan)

Migdol Oz (Prov. 18:10)

- This title relates to the last. “Migdol Oz” is a Hebrew phrase that means, “strong tower.” Siege warfare was a continual and horrific reality in the ancient world, and in fact remained so all the way up until the development of the canon in 11-1400’s.
- The Bible often alludes to siege warfare. Nothing was more horrific than being unprepared, surrounded by the enemy, and

starving to death. By contrast, little was more comforting than being able to retreat to a well-fortified, well supplied position.

- Well organized defenses during siege warfare first involved a strategic retreat to a well-fortified position. Secondly, the defenders would hold out until an ally could arrive and provide deliverance for the defenders, leading us to the next title.

YHWH Ezrah (Psalm 27:9)

- The Hebrew word “ezer” [i.e. “help”] or “ezrah” [i.e. “helper”], was often used to refer to strategic allies, which would come to a nation’s aid in times of trouble (Josh. 1:4; 10:4,6,33; 2 Sam. 8:5).
- Over and over again YHWH claims to be the “helper” for Israel. In fact, YHWH commanded Israel not to make foreign alliances upon which she would trust more than God (Deut. 17:14-17). [Contrast Is. 30:7 & 31:3 with Is. 41:10-14]
- Note this fascinating combination of titles. YHWH is the Rock, the Tower, AND the Ally, Who comes to the aid of His people! These time-tested titles of God have been displayed throughout history. God promised to help, and He is always faithful.

El Hane’eman “Faithful God” (Deut. 7:9)

- Context of Deuteronomy 7 is the Conquest. God promised Israel victory over seven nations “greater & mightier” than them. To encourage Israel, God affirms His faithfulness to the covenant He made with their forefathers.
- Modernity has seemingly lost touch with this virtue. Quality, dependability, and loyalty seem to be a thing of the past. Everything breaks, leaks, fails, or snaps. Customer Service isn’t what it used to be, and we can’t make a deal on a handshake!
- Yet with God, His Word is His bond, His integrity is His guarantee, and His power is His assurance (Ps. 138:2). Look at His perfect track record, EST. since ETERNITY!

- God's faithfulness is tied to His immutability. All of God's promises AND threats come to pass, because He cannot alter His Word.
- In fact, God has established a "sign" in the heavens to assure us of His faithfulness on a regular basis. Recall Genesis 9. After the Flood, God promised to never again destroy the earth with water. He placed the rainbow in the sky to stand as a monument to that promise, and thus His unchanging faithfulness.

El Gibbor (Jeremiah 32:17-18)

- Jeremiah 32 is given amidst a tumultuous time in Israel's history. She was facing the Babylonian menace, yet God assured Israel that she would survive, and that He would restore her to the land, all because He is EL GIBBOR (cf. Gen. 49:24).
- "Gibbor" is a Hebrew word reserved for the toughest of tough. David's own elite bodyguard, which later passed to Solomon, went by this title. The "Gibborim" were the best of the best. The word is meant to communicate raw power.
- "The power of God is that ability and strength whereby He can bring to pass whatsoever He pleases, whatsoever His infinite wisdom may direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of His will may resolve. How vain would be the eternal counsels, if power did not step in to execute them." (Stephen Charnock).
- "Without power His mercy would be but feeble pity, His promises an empty sound, His threatenings a mere scarecrow. God's power is like Himself: infinite, eternal, incomprehensible; it can neither be checked, restrained, nor frustrated by the creature" (Stephen Charnock).
- Have you ever thought how to measure God's power? Infinite power means it is ultimately unmeasurable, however, what if we tried to put a number on it? J.D. Greer attempts to calculate what we can concerning the power of God as follows:
- The average output of a human on a row machine is about 320 watts in 2 minutes, enough to run 5 energy efficient light bulbs for 2 minutes. Contrast this with God. Though only 9,096 are

visible to the naked eye, 3 septillion stars exist in the universe [3 with 24 “0’s”].

Just for perspective on that number...

- 1 million seconds = 11 days
- 1 Billion seconds = 32 yrs.
- 1 Trillion seconds = 32,000 yrs.
- Each single star emits every second the average energy output of a trillion Atomic bombs. So in other words, the energy released from one star for one second could power my electric fan for over 23,000 yrs. Yet God upholds all of the universe with the WORD of His power!

Intimate Names

Alpha & Omega (Revelation 1:4-8)

- We can only appreciate God’s intimate goodness in light of God’s infinite greatness. Therefore, before we look at the intimate (i.e. immanent, close, & personal) names of God, consider by contrast God’s transcendence once more.
- The title “Alpha & Omega” appears 4x in the NT, all of which occur in Revelation (Rev. 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13). This title is taken from the Greek alphabet and is interpreted for us in each of its appearances in Revelation.
- This title means “the beginning and the ending,” the One “which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” “the first and the last.” This title is what scholars call “a mirrorism,” which takes the extremes of something, and uses it as a shorthand way of referring to totality, like “A-Z” in English.
- In other words, this title refers to the infinity of God in every way. God is infinite in time in that He exists before, above, and beyond all else. God is infinite in power in that anything that can be accomplished He can accomplish. God is infinite in space, in that He is not confined to one place, but dwells in all space simultaneously.

- The size and limitlessness of God is what ought to cause us to stand in stunned silence and wonderment (Psalm 145:3). Yet it is this very size of God that might cause one to wonder if God is apart, aloof, and unconcerned with mere earthlings, but the Bible says different.

Elohim Qarob “God is Near” (Jeremiah 23:23)

- In Jeremiah 23:16-40 God warns His people not to heed false prophets. These false prophets taught the people that they could get away with any sin at any time. Yet God reminds them that this is NOT the case, because He is “a God at hand... not a God afar off.”
- This reality of the nearness of God serves as a terror to the wicked. Yet by contrast, it serves as a comfort to the righteous. Compare James 4:8, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” A famous poem by an unknown author captures these ideas well.

One night I dreamed a dream.

As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.

Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.

For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,

One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,

I looked back at the footprints in the sand.

I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,

especially at the very lowest and saddest times,

there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.

"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,

You'd walk with me all the way.

But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life,

there was only one set of footprints.

I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you

Never, ever, during your trials and testings.

When you saw only one set of footprints,

It was then that I carried you."

- Many believe that this poem is taken from Deut 1:29-31, where God describes Himself with these words, "Dread not, neither be afraid of them."³⁰ The Lord your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes;³¹ And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place."
- The reality is that God loves us. His infinite size, power, and strength does not make Him aloof or disinterested in us, but rather the opposite. Recall Isaiah 40:31 where after describing God's infinite greatness for 30 verses, Isaiah informs us that this power is personally available to any who trust in YHWH!

El Roi (Gen 16:13)

- Recall our past study on Hagar & Ishmael. After being driven from home by a jealous Sarah, Hagar & Ishmael found themselves amidst an arid wilderness facing imminent death. Yet it was within these circumstances God appeared to them, provided for them, and promised them a glorious future.
- Hagar humbly responds to God with these words, "Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?"¹⁴ Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered" (Gen. 16:13-14).
- The point of this passage is breathtaking. The lowly, ridiculed, and rejected handmade discovers that she is personally watched over by the Almighty God Himself. She did not earn

His watch-care, nor deserve His watch-care, but she desperately needed it and received it. What a God we serve!

Elohim Shama (Psalm 116:1-2)

- The Psalmist of Psalm 116 begins the Psalm with a jubilant eruption of devotion. He declares that he loves the LORD, and determines to devote himself to the LORD, all “because He has heard My voice and my supplications. ² Because He has inclined His ear to me.”
- YHWH is not only a God who “sees,” but He is also a God who “hears.” Recall the context of God’s statements to Moses at the burning bush. Exodus 2:23-24 reports, “²³ And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. ²⁴ And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵ And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.”
- As God appears to Moses the Scripture says, “And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. ⁵ And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. ⁶ Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. ⁷ And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; ⁸ And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians” (Ex. 3:4-8).
- As we have mentioned before, one of the most dramatic ways to contrast YHWH with the false gods of the nations is to read Psalm 115. Let’s read the Psalm together, and note how YHWH is the living God, Who can see, hear, move, and act on our behalf!

Immanuel (Matt. 1:18-25)

- God is not only the living God, Who sees, hears, moves, and acts, but He is also the loving God, Who descends to earth to take upon Himself the sinfulness of the human race, die in our place, and rise from the grave all so that He might bring us to Himself!
- “Immanuel” means “God with us.” This title underscores two grand realities. First, it proclaims the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is God come to earth. Secondly, however, it announces that God is not aloof or disinterested in humanity. Rather, He loves us enough to descend from His lofty abode, and take up residence upon the earth.
- Read Psalm 113. Note how our God is high and lifted up. He must humble Himself to simply behold the things both in heaven and upon the earth. Yet He does much more than simply look at us. He speaks to us, comes to our aid, descends to earth, becomes human, stoops to being our servant, and selflessly substitutes Himself as our sacrifice!
- In the Iliad Homer records a conversation between the Greek gods Juno and Vulcan. Juno says to Vulcan, “son it is not the etiquette of the gods to suffer on behalf of humans.” With few exceptions, all Greek and Roman writers separated humanity & deity leaving humanity in misery without remedy.
- Islam also despises the doctrine of the incarnation, believing it to violate the dignity of God. Yet the doctrine of God’s descent to earth, robing in flesh, and dying in our place exhibits the infinite love God has for His lowly, lost creatures.

- The late minister John Stott once said, “I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross. The only God I believe in is the One Nietzsche ridiculed as “God on the cross.” In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it? I have entered many Buddhist temples in different Asian countries and stood respectfully before the statue of the Buddha, his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing round his mouth, a remote look on his face, detached from the agonies of the world.
- But each time after a while I have had to turn away. And in imagination I have turned instead to that lonely, twisted, tortured figure on the cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerably thirsty, plunged in Godforsaken darkness. That is the God for me!”
- He laid aside his immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us. Our sufferings become more manageable in the light of his. There is still a question mark against human suffering, but over it we boldly stamp another mark, the cross that symbolizes divine suffering. “The cross of Christ ... is God’s only self-justification in such a world as ours.”

Elohay Selchot “God Ready to Forgive” (Neh. 9:17)

- Read Nehemiah 9:5-17. As the returned exiles gathered together back in the land of Israel, worked to rebuild their nation, and surrender their hearts, they reviewed their history.

As they contemplated their own sinfulness and rebellion, the character of God's forgiveness became more powerfully clear.

- We like Israel are sheep who have gone astray. Everyone of us have turned to our own way. Yet the LORD has laid upon Christ the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6). By His very nature, YHWH is Elohay Selchot, a "God ready to forgive."
- Recall how God disclosed Himself to Moses upon Mount Sinai, "And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. ⁶ And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, ⁷ Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (Ex. 34:5-7).
- Recall that the long-suffering of God in Hebrew literally means that God has "a long nose!" The Hebrew language is a very concrete language that expresses abstract ideas like "anger" with a concrete reality like "heat." Thus anger is often expressed as having a "hot nose," i.e. snorting.
- In contrast then, to have "a long nose," means that you take a long time to get angry! In other words, God is patient, and predisposed toward loving forgiveness. God is indeed a God of wrath, but He is also reluctant to unleash His wrath. He much prefers our humble repentance so that He may shower mercy.
- This is why the apostle John can summarize the character of God in this way, "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Yet the question remains, how much does God love? Look again to the words of the apostle John, a.k.a. "the beloved disciple."
- "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. ¹⁰ Herein is love, not that we loved God,

but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:9-10).

- John is saying that humanity & history never really knew what love was until a particular moment, wherein God unveiled the unforeseen depths of His bottomless love. That moment was on the cross! The cross served to both simultaneously satisfy the justice of God, while also demonstrating the love of God. What a God we serve!

Elohim Ahavah “God who Loves”

Jeremiah 31:1-6

- Love is God’s essential nature (1 John 4:7). This seems too good to be true, yet the Bible declares it and History demonstrates it. God is for us (Rom. 8:31-32), and thus He is against anything that would harm us.
- The Bible directly states that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). The absence of the article before “love” (the verse does not say, God is the love) indicates that this is the very nature of God. The presence of the article before “God” (literally, the God is love) shows that the statement is not reversible; it cannot read, “Love is God” (as Christian Science asserts). (Burggraff)
- Throughout history God has displayed a patient, long-suffering, kind compassion toward His people. Early in Hebrew history, Deuteronomy announces this kind of love that God possesses for His people (Dt. 7:7-11). Then even after centuries of rebellion toward Him, God reaffirms His love toward His people in Jeremiah 31:1-6.
- God’s justice demands that He purge our sin, yet it is God’s love that demands He preserve the repentant sinner. God is not merely fond of us. He is for us. God is not simply interested in us. He is dedicated to us. He has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us. What a God we serve!
- This title, “Elohim Ahavah,” declares that God is a God of love... Yet let’s look at other titles, which declare to us the manifold nature of this love. In other words, God’s love is like a diamond with multiple facets and angles. Only when we

examine it from all sides, can we appropriately appreciate its variegated beauty!

Elohim Racham “God of Compassion” (Isaiah 49:13-16)

- Recall that the context of Isaiah 49 is after the announcement of the Babylonian Captivity. God has to purge the sin from the nation of Judah. Yet as He does this, the nation will be tempted to think that God does not care. In fact, Judah charges God in Isaiah 49 with the charge that God has forgotten them. So God replies with these powerful words.
- ¹⁵ “Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.¹⁶ See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.”
- God compares His love for Judah with a mother’s inherent compassion for her children.
- The Hebrew word “compassion” is connected to the Hebrew root for “womb.” Thus this word refers to the mother-like instinct to nurture, care, and protect her children.
- God assures the nation of Judah that He would never, could never, forget her. God has inscribed her upon His hands!
- Compare Psalm 78:36-38. This passage lists the many examples of Israel’s unfaithfulness to God. The Psalm exposes the heart of rebellion rooted deep within Israel. Yet in spite of this, God is deliberate and consistent in His compassion toward the nation.

YHWH Goel “Lord our Redeemer” (Is. 41:14)

- The Bible has much to say concerning the concept of “Redemption.” Understanding this cultural concept in ancient Israel will greatly aid us in understanding the nature of God’s love toward us. So, let’s take a moment to contemplate the GOEL in Hebrew culture.
- The Hebrew concept of the GOEL surfaces all over the Bible. The Torah in particular speaks much of this rather dramatic idea.

Understand first of all that the Bible is written from the perspective of a tribal culture. What that means is that EVERYTHING in life was, in one way or another, associated with the tribe. Individuality was not emphasized. The clan, tribe, or larger group unit was EVERYTHING.

- The greatest contribution you could make to the tribe was to honor it. Family, clan, or tribal honor was your highest goal. Whenever tribal honor was threatened, it had to be dealt with in the swiftest, and at times severest, of ways. Dishonor could come upon a family, clan, or a tribe in multiple ways. Here are some examples.
 - 1) A family member could get into debt, lose his land, or worse, lose his freedom by being sold into slavery (Lev. 25:25-30, 47-55).
 - 2) A family member could get involved in a legal dispute, where his reputation or resources were under threat (Job 19:25).
 - 3) A family member could die without children, thus the inheritance & property could not be passed on (Dt. 25:5-10).
 - 4) A family member could be assaulted, injured, or killed, and left unavenged (Num. 35; Dt. 19).
- The solution in any one of these individual cases was for GOEL to intervene. The GOEL was always to be the closest male kin to the individual. This typically was a brother, though when a brother did not exist, it could be a father, uncle, nephew, etc. The GOEL was considered a sacred honor, because the GOEL had the primary responsibility to restore honor and dignity to the tribe.
- Thus, the GOEL would intervene in a lawsuit and serve as the advocate for his clan member. Or the GOEL would intervene to purchase land, property, or person out of debt or servitude. Further, the GOEL would intervene to raise up seed to his brother, by taking his brother's widow as his wife. Lastly, the GOEL would act as the blood avenger in the case of a murder.

- Numbers 35 & Deuteronomy 19 both describe the actions of the GOEL, when one of his family members was killed via murder or manslaughter. The GOEL possessed the sacred responsibility of pursuing the wrongdoer, and seeking to kill him. The wrongdoer, recall, had the freedom to find safety in a city of refuge ONLY in the case of manslaughter. If he was convicted of murder, he was to be released from the city of refuge, and handed over to the GOEL for execution.
- The role of the GOEL surfaces throughout the Bible in multiple narratives. The book of Ruth is perhaps the most famous example in the Bible of the GOEL a.k.a. the Kinsman Redeemer.
- However, this title also became a favorite title of God to describe Himself. The book of Isaiah alludes to this idea 23x, either referencing God as the REDEEMER, or His people as the REDEEMED. More on this in our next title.
- The greatest revelation of God as our GOEL is seen in the person and work of Jesus Christ a.k.a. our elder brother (Heb. 2:10-12), who purchased us from slavery (Gal. 4:4-5), pleads our case as our advocate (1 John 2:1-4), takes us as His bride (Eph. 5:22-33), purchases for us an Inheritance (Eph. 1), and also avenges our wrongful deaths (Rev. 6).
- As believers in Jesus Christ, we have been released from sin, snatched from dishonor, and restored into the family of God. We share in an inheritance, yet at the expense of another. Jesus is the ultimate Elder Brother or Kinsman Redeemer, who selflessly sacrifices Himself in order to lavish us with love & restore honor to the family of God!

El Yeshuati (Isaiah 12:2)

- Isaiah 12 is sometimes labeled as “the song of the redeemed,” in which they revel in God’s grand redemption. This song has special significance as we consider God being our GOEL, Who has REDEEMED us. Read Isaiah 12.
- Three times in this short little chapter, Isaiah uses the word, “salvation.” This is the word that means, “deliverance.” It is the word used by the redeemed, as they rejoice, and revel in their redeemer, who has granted to them restoration and reward.
- Revelation 5 gives us the NT equivalent of the same idea. Read Revelation 5. Note in particular the ideas of REDEMPTION, HONOR, & the resultant PRAISE.
- Let us learn to think of God and our REDEEMER, and thus revel in His SALVATION. He is El Yeshuati.

Avinu & Abba (Jn. 1:12; 1 Jn. 3:1 & Gal. 4:1-7)

- According to the Bible, God not only redeems us, but He also adopts us into His family. “Adoption” in Greek literally means “son-placement.” By trusting Christ, God becomes “Avinu,” the Hebrew word that means “our Father.” John 1:12-13 declares this blessed privilege, and the same author later revels in this idea in 1 John 3:1.
- In the 1st century world in which the NT was written, the title “Father” was less of a title of intimacy, and more of a title of respect. Both Jewish and Roman cultures revered the role of a Father. Roman culture in particular had what is known as the Pater Familias, which granted the Father absolute sovereignty over his family, even the right over life & death.
- Because of this, the Jews did not refer to God as their “Father.” In fact, they would have been offended by the flippant, presumptuous use of such a title. Note how this is illustrated in the life of Jesus, when He labels Himself the “Son of God,” and is nearly stoned because of it (John 10:22-33).
- The Jewish crowd, as well as the disciples for that matter, would have gasped as Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Our Father, which art in heaven...” In the original context many scholars argue that Jesus would have used the Aramaic “Abba.” No Jew was expected to reflect this sort of relationship

with God, and to do so was considered blasphemy. Note how Jesus had to emphasize this relationship throughout His teaching, because it was unique to His teaching (cf. Luke 11).

- Nowhere in the extensive prayer literature of Judaism do we find God referenced as “Father.” This was a distinctly Christian idea. Jesus urged His followers to enjoy the same intimacy with the Father that He Himself enjoyed. So the privilege we enjoy as followers of Christ, and thus children of God, goes beyond respect into intimacy. Note the three appearances of the word “Abba” in the NT (Mk 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).
- The word “Abba” is an Aramaic word akin to our term “Pappa.” It is in the vocative voice of direct address. In other words, “Abba” is something a child would be privileged to say within the family circle. Thus while “father” was seen as a title of reverence and respect, the term “Abba,” was more, it was a term of intimacy & endearment.
- In the context of the book of Galatians Paul informs Christians that we have gone from the status of slaves to sons of God. In his commentary on Galatians Timothy George says, “Something of this kind of reverent ecstasy must have been experienced by the Gentile believers of Galatia when having been saved from religious superstition and the worship of idols they discovered through faith in Jesus Christ a welcome access into the very heart of God.”
- He goes on to say, “The new relationship they had with God, evidenced by the Abba prayer, had been affected through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Already they were the children of God and heirs of the promise. All of this had happened through the grace of God, the God who sent his Son and who had now sent his Spirit into their hearts. Thus, there was no need for them to be circumcised or to seek the favor of God by keeping the works of the law. With confident boldness they could approach the throne of God crying, ‘Abba, Father!’”
- Let us conclude with a quick contemplation of Hebrews 4:16, which encourages us as believers to be bold in our approach to the throne of grace. The Greek word “bold” means “all-speech.” In other words, God invites us into an intimate

relationship with Himself, where we can say what is on our hearts and hold nothing back. God knows our struggles, our desires, and our weaknesses. He wants us to lay them at His feet, so He can lavish us with grace to overcome them. Praise Abba!

