



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Great Name of God

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Interim Bible Study Schedule

Wednesdays at 12 noon in HHR #6.

Everyone still working in the capitol is welcome.

Just bring your lunch and join us.

INTRODUCTION

Isaiah 40-48 is a glorious passage of Scripture. In it, one can catch a glimpse of God's wisdom, sovereignty, power, compassion, knowledge, power, greatness, and grace. One can also see that He is the creator and sustainer of the universe; and that He has redeemed, ransomed and delivered His people (both Israel back then, and His people, the church today). One can see that Yahweh God does all things to display His great glory (and His people receive the benefits of that display). None can be compared with Yahweh.

In the passage today, we are to take a look at what God reveals about Himself through His great name.

*Isaiah 48:9-11 "For the sake of My name I delay My wrath, And for My praise I restrain it for you, In order not to cut you off.
¹⁰Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. ¹¹"For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can My name be profaned?
And My glory I will not give to another.*

In Isaiah 40, the prophet proclaimed that God will deliver His people. At the end of chapter 44 and into 45, God declared that His servant, Cyrus, will be the one He uses in the deliverance. This prophecy of the Persian king is fulfilled in Ezra 1—a book written approximately 150 years after Isaiah.

In the first part of Isaiah 48, God informs the people that He surely knows them. In verses one and two, He tells them that they call upon and invoke His name, but not in truth and sincerity. In verses 3-7, He reminds them that He declared long ago what He was going to do for He knew they would try to credit their own worthless idols. In verse eight, He tells them that He knows they really don't listen, but rather they are deceiving and rebellious.

Therefore for the sake of His name, for the sake of His praise, He delays His wrath. Instead, He refines them and tests them by affliction (9-10). As has been discussed before, God does all things for His glory and His people are the beneficiaries of that display (43:1-13).

In verse 11, the same thought can be observed, as God says, "For my Own sake, for my own sake." He repeats for emphasis. He wants His people to know that they are not the reason He acts (for they are rebellious idolaters), but rather He will act for the sake of His praise and glory. He will not allow His name to be profaned.

In Malachi, God's anger is displayed when His name is profaned:

Malachi 1:10-14 "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you," says the LORD of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you. For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering that is pure; for My name will be great among the nations," says the LORD of hosts. "But you are profaning it, in that you say, 'The table of the Lord is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised.' You also say, 'My, how tiresome it is!' And you disdainfully sniff at it," says the LORD of hosts, "and you bring what was taken by robbery, and what is lame or sick; so you bring the offering! Should I receive that from your hand?" says the LORD. "But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock, and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King," says the LORD of hosts, "and My name is feared among the nations."

In His names, God's glory and character shine—which is why God is so protective of His name and why we should revere it.

I. ELOHIM (GOD)

What do you think of when you read the names God, LORD, Lord, or Almighty God?

These simply look like different names for the same thing—God. In the ancient Hebrew culture, though, a name meant much more than a label one

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puts on a face. In examining the names of God, as they are written in the Hebrew text, there is more than what meets the eye (or ear) of the English translation. Each name means something a little different and God further reveals Himself through His names.

The first name or title referenced in Scripture is the name *Elohim* --אֱלֹהִים.

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

Other passages include, "Then *Elohim* said to Noah..." (Genesis 6:13) and "He said also, "I am the *Elohim* of your father, the *Elohim* of Abraham, the *Elohim* of Isaac, and the *Elohim* of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at *Elohim*. (Exodus 3:6).

THERE IS BLESSING AND COMFORT IN THIS GREAT NAME OF GOD SIGNIFYING SUPREME POWER, SOVEREIGNTY, AND GLORY ON THE ONE HAND... --NATHAN STONE

The name *Elohim* (or a form of it) is simply translated "God" over 2300 times in the Old Testament. It is the plural form of *El*, the generic word for god. The use of the plural form for the Hebrews shows intensity, majesty or honor. Some scholars see the plural usage as a reference to the Hebrew understanding of a triune God who works through Word and Spirit in creation (cf. Gen. 1). All agree though, that the plural *Elohim* does convey a sense of the one Supreme Being who is the only true God.

The name *Elohim* expresses the aspect of God that creates, sustains, and is sovereign. The title presents the attribute of omnipotence; generally speaking about His greatness and glory. In itself, the name *Elohim* does not entail any of God's moral qualities (holiness, goodness, grace, love, etc), but of His majesty. Again, it speaks of the Supreme One of the universe, who could be either good or bad (God's moral qualities are seen in the name, *Yahweh*).

It was *Elohim* that the Israelite midwives feared more than the Egyptian king/god, Pharaoh (Exodus 1:15-17). When commanded by Pharaoh to kill the newborn Hebrew baby boys, they were obedient to *Elohim*, the Sovereign King of the universe.

When commanded to bow down to the idol King Nebuchadnezzar created and then threatened with their lives, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused for they knew their *Elah* (Aramaic form of *Elohim*) could deliver (Daniel 3:15-18).

As one reads the name, *Elohim* (God), in the Scriptures, let he or she be reminded that one is reading about the Supreme Being in the universe. *Elohim* is not a mid-level executive or foreman or manager with someone who is over Him or to whom He must give an account. *Elohim* is the One who created us, sustains us, and controls all things. He is the One who is above all in size, strength, and wisdom. He is the One who declares and that which is declared, happens. *Elohim* is the majestic King over all.

Deuteronomy 32:3 "For I proclaim the name of the Lord, Ascribe greatness to our Elohim!"

Joshua 1:9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for Yahweh your Elohim is with you wherever you go."

Psalms 14:1 The fool has said in his heart, "There is no Elohim."

"There is blessing and comfort in this great name of God signifying supreme power, sovereignty, and glory on the one hand...and on the other hand signifying a covenant relationship which He is ever faithful to keep."¹

II. YAHWEH (LORD)

The name, *Yahweh* (יהוה)² first appears in **Genesis 2:4**—*This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that Yahweh Elohim made earth and heaven.* *Yahweh* is translated "LORD" 6823 times in the OT or sometimes GOD (note in both uses that all the letters are capitalized). Examples of these include:

Joshua 1:9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for Yahweh your Elohim is with you wherever you go."

Isaiah 6:3 And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is Yahweh of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."

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Psalm 37:4 Delight yourself in Yahweh; And He will give you the desires of your heart.

It is the name that God gave Himself when Moses asked, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I shall say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" God replied to him, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Exodus 3:13-14). Literally, *Yahweh* means "to be" or "being"; thus the first person verb form being translated into English as "I AM."

In this name, God revealed to Moses that He is self-existent and eternal. Only in God can there be existence; only He can truly "be." Our existence is dependent on many factors, including God Himself. But God is reliant upon nothing and has always been. Another way of understanding God's reply to Moses is "I am the One who is." He is not "I am what I used to be" or "I am who I am going to be", but "I AM."

This name of God was revealed solely to God's people. The other nations did not know the Supreme *Elohim* as *Yahweh*, only the nation of Israel; the nation that He chose, delivered, sustained and loved (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). The *el* of the Canaanites, the people driven out of the Promised Land, were 'Dagon', 'Baal', 'Ashterah', etc. The *el* of the Israelites was *Yahweh*. (Please remember that the other *el* were nothing—they held no power, breath, movement, life. There is only one true *el*—Yahweh Elohim).

When reading *Yahweh* or LORD (or GOD), other attributes of God are revealed. In the name, He is seen to be holy (Leviticus 19:2) and righteous (Psalm 11:7). In it, He reveals His love (Jeremiah 31:3). Exodus 34 reveals much about the character of God in the name Yahweh:

Exodus 34:6-7 Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

In verse 6, Yahweh shows God's compassion, grace, patience love and truthfulness. In verse 7, He declares His willingness to forgive, as well as His holiness and justice.

In the name *Elohim*, we see God as the Supreme One. In His proper name *Yahweh*, we see Him as holy. *Elohim* is the creator, sustainer, almighty, sovereign being. *Yahweh* is the holy, righteous *Elohim* that loves His people. In Joshua 1:9, this can be observed: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for Yahweh your Elohim is with you wherever you go." Who will be with Joshua? Joshua's *Elohim*. What is the name of Joshua's *Elohim*? *Yahweh*.

It is this covenant name of God, revealed only to God's people, that is commanded not to be used lightly. The third commandment states, *You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain* (Exodus 20:7). And it is this name that should not be blasphemed (Leviticus 24:16). God's name is to be revered and not dishonored. The people of Israel profaned it by their wicked actions and giving praise to other gods. But through His actions God will work so that the name His people stained will be seen as glorious again.

Isaiah 42:8 "I am Yahweh, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.

III. ADONAI (LORD)

In **Genesis 15:2**, Abram prayed, *O Lord GOD (Adonai Yahweh)* ...

The third name to be examined is the name or title of *Adonai*--אֲדֹנָי. Similar to *Elohim*, *Adonai* is also the plural form of *adon* which means "master", "sir", or "owner". Again, the plural of intensity, majesty, and honor can be observed. When the word is used in the singular form, it is in reference to an earthly master (Genesis 24:42). In the plural form, it is used of God; the greatness of the Master is highlighted. When translated into Greek, the word is translated "despot" and its meaning remains the same. It is used in reference to both God (2 Peter 3:1) and Jesus (1 Timothy 1:12).³

For Isaiah, the title *Adonai* is most important.⁴ In 6:1, he notes "In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw *Adonai* sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted..." In other words, in the year that their earthly king, who had a good and peaceful reign for over 50 years, died, He saw the eternal King

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who reigns over the universe. With the uncertainty of the future of the nation coming at the death of their king, Isaiah was reminded that their Sovereign King was still on the throne. And even though it brought much fear to Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-7), it served as a reminder of who is truly in control.

Psalm 8:1a O Yahweh, our Adonai, How majestic is Your name in all the earth...

2 Samuel 7:22 "For this reason You are great, O Adonai Yahweh; for there is none like You, and there is no Elohim besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

To help clarify the distinctions of these names, think of this: A man is what Barack Obama is. Barack Obama is his name. President is his title. Elohim is what God is. Yahweh is His name. Adonai is His title.

A knowledge of the distinctions helps in the understanding of the question Jesus asked the Jewish religious leaders to explain David when David said, "The LORD said to my Lord" (Matthew 22:44a). This was a direct quote from Psalm 110:1—"Yahweh said to my Adoni". The Jewish leaders could not answer for they would have pronounced the deity of Jesus. This is a pointed reference by David to Jesus, the second person of the Trinity. David calls God Yahweh and uses a singular form of Adonai to address Jesus as "my Lord". All acknowledged that the coming Messiah was a "Son of David" (Mt. 22: 42), but in David's culture, he would not call his son "my Lord" or "Master;" unless, his son was actually greater than he. And this was Jesus' point in bringing up this passage; and it was that which entrapped the religious leaders. They knew the prophecies and they observed the clear prophetic signs in the life of Jesus, but they refused to acknowledge Him as the Son of God.

Deuteronomy 10:17 "For Yahweh your Elohim is Elohim of Elohim and Adonai of Adonai, the great El, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe.

CONCLUSION

Now, one may ask, "This is a nice history lesson, but what does it do for us in the 21st-century? Well, there is much to do about it. Please note the following subheadings and bullet points for a glimpse of its relevance.

- o God is the Master of the universe.
- o God is the Master of all people, whether they acknowledge it or not.
- o God is the Master (as well as redeemer) of His people, therefore they are His servants.

REMEMBER THE CHARACTER OF OUR MASTER

- o Psalm 86:5—Our Master is good
- o Psalm 86:6—Our Master is incomparable
- o Psalm 86:9,10—Our Master is great
- o Psalm 86:15—Our Master is gracious, patient, compassionate
- o Psalm 136:3—Our Master's love is eternal
- o Romans 4:7,8—Our Master forgives
- o Romans 6:23—Our Master gives eternal life
- o 2 Timothy 2:2—Our Master knows who His servants are
- o Revelation 17:14—Our Master is master of all
- o Matthew 11:28-30—Our Master is gentle and His work is light

IN SERVING THE MASTER

- o Psalm 16:2—A proper attitude toward our Master
- o Acts 20:24—Finish the task given by our Master
- o Romans 12:11—Serve our Master
- o Romans 14:7,8—We live or die for our Master
- o 1 Corinthians 1:30,31—Boast only in our Master
- o Colossians 1:10—Be fully pleasing to our Master
- o Colossians 3:23—Work as for our Master and not as for other men

God can forgive you of your sins, are you interested?

¹ Nathan Stone, *Names of God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1944), 17.

² The name "Jehovah" comes from combining the Hebrew consonants of "YHWH" and the vowels of the name "Adonai". "Since the name Yahweh was considered so sacred that it should not be pronounced, the Massorettes inserted the vowels from Adonai to remind themselves to pronounce it when reading instead of saying Yahweh. Technically, this combination of consonants is known as the 'tetragrammaton'". (John MacArthur, *MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), 87.

³ If one uses a King James or New King James Version, or New American Standard version, the phrase Adonai Yahweh will be translated as "Lord GOD"—capitalizing all the letters of "GOD" just like it is when "LORD" is used for Yahweh. The New International Version translates the phrase as "Sovereign LORD".

⁴ It was important for Ezekiel as well. The title Adonai was used over 200 times in his O.T. book; constantly reminding the people who was truly in charge of all things.