



Who is God? Knowing Him by His Names Dominican Republic Mission Trip 2008 Daily Study

The LORD, God of Promise

What is “nothing?” Have you every tried to think about that? Stop and try it for a moment. Jonathan Edwards said that “nothing is what the sleeping rocks dream of.” I can buy that because it’s probably the closest thing our small minds can come up with to a question that is so far above us. Now think of eternity. Endless time....oops....in eternity past there was no time, only....nothing. In all that eternity and in all that nothing, there was only God. He is a being who had no beginning and has no end. He needs no one and nothing. He is self-existent and self-sufficient. There is nothing that exists outside of God that He needs. Even our praise and obedience can add nothing to the Infinite.

Now I want you to consider an even more difficult question. Why would this infinite God both create us and then reach down to us with an eternal plan that will put us in eternal fellowship with Himself? To put it more simply – Why did God make us and why does He make Himself known to us? The answer is very simple – It is for His own glory!

The next name of God that we want to consider is a name that He used to wrap up all of the concepts of the last two paragraphs and more into one name – YHWH. This is Yahweh (hwhy) or LORD (all caps) in our English Bibles. It means “to be.” This is the self-existent, personal, covenant-keeping God of Israel. It is used over 6,000 times in the Old Testament, with the first in Genesis 2:4. This is the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush. Read Genesis 3:13-15. The name of God here is “I AM” or “I AM WHO I AM” or “I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE.” By this name, Israel now had a personal God who was not just another “El.”

The Jews had such profound reverence for this name of God that they would not write down nor even speak this full name of God and so wrote the consonants only – YHWH. Because of this, we’ve even lost the original pronunciation. This name, like El, is often combined with other terms to describe God’s workings and attributes.

There are two other names that you should be familiar with that come out of this expression for God. The first is Adonai (yꞏd), which in the English is “Lord” (small ‘ord’) or “Master.” The same name in Greek would be Kurios (ku/riov). The Jews used this name as the one for God that they would speak and write. The word is plural (as is Elohim) and was first used in Genesis 15:2. The second name is Jehovah, English “LORD,” but is not in the Hebrew Bible. In the 6-7th century AD, Jewish translators wanted to make the text more readable to us Gentiles and combined the consonants of YHWH with the vowels of Adonai. Grammatically, this is the equivalent of Yahweh.

First we saw that God revealed Himself as Creator, then to the patriarchs as the all-powerful God who has revealed Himself to man with promises of salvation. Now He further reveals Himself to a chosen nation as a PERSONAL God who keeps those promises. Our God is not distant and He is not silent. If you are a Christian, then you are one of God’s chosen possessions. God is your LORD. To all other people who are unsaved He is still Creator, but only to His own is He LORD.

Read Exodus 6:2; Exodus 15:1-18, 20:1-2, I Kings 18:20-39. Take some time to notice the uses of “LORD” and “God.” Reflect on what these might mean, or what is their significance?

