

The Names of God

Elohim / Yahweh

April 7, 2013

Introduction: The Names of God

1. Why do the biblical authors use so many names for God? Why are they important?
2. What did the Psalmist mean when he said, “Those who know your *name* put their trust in you”? (Ps. 9:10)

I. Elohim

1. Elohim occurs 2602 times in the Old Testament! It is the first name for God in the Bible (Gen. 1:1), and occurs 31 more times throughout the first chapter of Genesis. According to its usage in Genesis one, what does Elohim mean?
2. Describe one feature of Elohim’s creation that might cause someone to acknowledge that God is in fact a strong, creative maker. What features of God’s creation motivate you to worship him?
3. On Sunday we used the object lesson of the paper bag filled with individual pieces of paper numbered from one to ten. We said that if we popped the bag full of numbers, the numbers would fall onto the floor in sequential order only if someone arranged them that way. In what ways is the “paper bag” analogy helpful to understanding Elohim?
4. What does Paul say about Elohim in Colossians 1:15-16?
5. If we understand Jesus to be Elohim in the sense that he is the strong creator of Genesis 1, why is the incarnation of Jesus even more astounding?

II. Yahweh

1. Yahweh occurs 6828 times in the Old Testament. The Jewish people viewed it as the most sacred name for God.
2. One of the most familiar passages that includes the name Yahweh is Exodus 3, where Yahweh speaks to Moses from the burning bush. What does the burning bush itself teach us about the meaning of Yahweh?
3. We focused on this one aspect of the meaning of Yahweh – the eternal one, self-existent, self-sustaining. Why is it mind-boggling for us to think in terms of eternity? What does this say about our finiteness compared to God?

4. What do you think of my son's question, "Does God know how old he is?" What makes this question difficult to answer?
5. What's the difference between eternal life and everlasting life? Which will we experience?
6. Read John 8:48-59. What similarities do you see between John 8:58 and Exodus 3:14? Who did Jesus claim to be?
7. If we understand Jesus to be Yahweh, the eternal, self-existent one, why is the death of Jesus all the more remarkable?