



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“What is God Like?, part I”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee again for the privilege, which is before us, of looking into the Scriptures and we pray that Thou will direct and guide our thinking concerning theology. We ask Lord, for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and may our hearts be open to the truths that we pause and reflect upon. And as we ask in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is made possible by his death on the cross, our knowledge of Thee. For his sake. Amen.

[Message] Now tonight, our subject is “What is God Like?” or “The Being, Names and Attributes of God.” As you will notice from the outline, that this is a two-part subject. That is, tonight we are going to try to cover the being and names, and then the next time, we will finish up with the consideration of the attributes of God. So for Scripture reading, turn with me first to a verse in the Book of Isaiah. Then we want to read one verse in the Book of Exodus. Then a verse in the Gospel of John, which we have read once before.

Isaiah chapter 40, verse 18. Isaiah chapter 40, verse 18. Now, this text is taken out of its context, but it is not taken out contrary to the context. And it is a text, as you will note it; that bears upon our subject. Isaiah chapter 40, verse 18, “To whom then will ye liken God? Or, what likeness will ye compare unto him?” Then, let’s turn back to the second book of the Bible, the Book of Exodus chapter 15, verse 11. Chapter 15, verse 11,

in which in the Song of Moses, Moses offers something that pertains to our subject also. Exodus chapter 15, verse 11, “Who is like unto thee O Lord among the gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonder?” Now the final text -- one that we have already read once before -- John chapter 8, verse 19. John chapter 8, verse 19. Here, the apostle writes, giving the words of our Lord, “Then they said unto him, where is thy Father? Jesus answered, “ye neither know me nor my Father. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.”

Now in these texts of course, we have comprehended a great deal of the subject that we’re going to talk about tonight; because the question, “Who is like unto thee O Lord among the gods?” is a question that of course, cannot really be answered except that there is no one like unto thee among the gods. And then the last text of course, gives us a clue as to how we may understand and know that one who is basically un-normal in his essential being.

First of all, a word of review, we have up to this point, learned these things in our studies. Perhaps I should put it another way. We should have learned these things in our studies. First of all, that God exists. Secondly, that God may be known, while at the same time, he is incomprehensible. I illustrated that by my wife, whom I know very well, but at the same time, is incomprehensible to me. Thirdly, that God is known by revelation. I’m sure of that, because she’s here tonight. She didn’t hear me before -- that God is known by revelation. And fourthly, that this revelation is in two parts. Unwritten - - his revelation of himself in providence, history, conscience, nature -- and written -- his special revelation in the word of God.

And we have learned that this written revelation, this special revelation is verbally inspired. It is primarily inspired, fully inspired. It is also inspired to the extent of its word. And so to put it all together, it is verbally and primarily inspired. Fully and verbally inspired. Then we learned last time, that this inspired revelation is known by interpretation, the human activity and illumination, the divine activity.

So to sum it up, God exists. God may be known. God is known by revelation; that revelation is in two parts. The written part is verbally inspired. This inspired revelation is known by interpretation -- the human activity; and illumination -- the divine side. We cannot understand if we do not study. That is interpretation. We cannot hope to understand if the Holy Spirit is not our possession and if he does not teach us the things that we attempt to interpret. So that ultimately, understanding of the Bible is dependent upon the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit as we apply ourselves to the interpretation of the text.

Now interpretation of course, involves a lot of things. Basically, and first of all, it involves the use of intelligence that God has given us. The eyes to read, the mind to ponder and our knowledge even of English grammar; in the interpretation of the text. But ultimately, we are dependent on the Holy Spirit, who is our divine teacher of the word. Now tonight, we’re coming to the next subject, “What is God Like?” And of course, it is the biggest subject of all, because it is the subject of God.

I am reminded of a school boy who, after much puzzlement over the choice of the first theme that he was ever asked to write, finally decided upon this subject, “The Universe, with Two Illustrations.” And of course, when we come to the subject of God, we are coming to a subject that is just as big. But it is not only the biggest subject in the Bible. It is also the most important subject in the Bible, and I think possibly the most timely subject, because we have lost the concept of the majesty of God. And of course, I’m speaking primarily of our evangelical churches.

I feel, very definitely, that those churches that are not evangelical; have lost their concept of the majesty of God. But we, in the evangelical part of -- or in the evangelical body of Christ -- we too have lost our sense, in great measure, of the majesty of God. And that is reflected in the meetings of the church and it is also reflected in the lives of those of us who belong to the body of Christ. We have lost the concept that God is present in our meetings, and that he is great, and that he is greatly to be feared. And I

think you can see evidences of it, and you can see evidences of it even in the local church in which I find myself all the time too. Because sometimes, our assembly of our saints -- our churches -- reflect; well, a group of chattering magpies who have come for a convention.

Now of course, I think the other extreme is just as bad. When you go into some churches, and those who are there seem to be like the doleful dwellers in a wax museum. And if I had to choose, of course, I would choose the former, as over against the latter. But it is very easy for us to go to one of the two extremes. If we do not have this real sense of the majesty of God, and the consciousness of his presence in our meetings, we will go to one extreme. We’re happy and we’re joyous in the Lord and the things that we have in him. And so we forget all about the fact that God is really a great king who sits on a throne, and we are his subjects. And so we chatter and we carry on as if he were not present, although we know him.

Then the other extreme of course, is to sit in the tradition in which there was a knowledge of God a couple of generations ago; and we’re still now carrying on the facade of the presence of the majesty of God in our meetings. And so, we’re quite and we’re very subdued. We’re dead.

But it seems to me that the proper attitude is in between. We should be happy and joyous because we know Jesus Christ and through him we know God, and we have come to meet with the saints of God. And there should be in our meetings, a sense too, of the fact that we are in the presence of God; and that God is great. That he is glorious in his praises. That he is glorious in holiness. And we’re utterly different from him, and that his valid -- his grace at being present with us in our meetings. And he’s a great God, and a God who should produce in our hearts, if we know him as he really is, a tremendous sense of awe in his presence. Now I think that one of the reasons that we come in our meetings as we do, is because we do not really have right ideas about God.

So what is God like? First of all, in our outline -- Roman I -- the being of God or his essence. Now, we’re going to think about God, the most important thing to us. By the way, no people, no person, no church has ever risen above its idea of God. It is impossible for the United States as a nation to arise above the general conception of God that its people have. It is impossible for a church to rise above the concept of God that the members of that church, generally speaking, possess. And it is impossible for us to rise above, individually, the concept that we have of God. That determines everything in our lives.

Now the scholastics reduced all speculations regarding God to three questions. One: Is there a God? Two: What is God? And Three: What is God Like? And we are answering now the second one: What is God? And then next Monday, we are going to look at: What is God Like? So Capital A now, the definition of God.

Now we’ve referred to this before, but I think some of these things we need to review; and this is one of them. Remember we said, that it is impossible for us to define God. Now the reason we cannot define God is because we do not have any standard with which we can compare him. We do not have any category in which we may place him. We do not have any pigeonhole, so to speak, in which we can put God if we’re thinking of a unique God. If we were to associate him with a God, we make him of course, only one of the Gods. And he is not what the word of God reveals him to be. So when we talk about a definition of God, we’re talking about something that is basically impossible. We cannot finally define God. We can describe him. We can say certain things about him, and that’s what the Bible does. The Bible says, for example, God is love. That’s not a definition of God, because there are other things about God than love. We cannot say love is God. God is love. That’s a true description of one aspect of his being.

The Bible also says of course, that God is light. That says something else about it. The Bible states that, “God is a consuming fire.” That states another thing about God. So

we may describe God -- back also, I just remembered another text. The Bible says that, “God is spirit.” That says something further about him. All of these things describe aspects of God, but they do not define. He’s more than spirit. He’s more than a consuming fire. He’s more than light. He’s more than love. So we cannot really set forth an absolute definition of God.

But remember we pointed out that we can give a relational definition of God. And the Bible gives us just such a relational definition in more than one place. Let’s turn back to that passage. It’s in Exodus chapter 3. It’s one of the great passages of the Old Testament, because in it, we have the basic relationship that God had to Israel. And it is set forth, and in this description of his relationship to them; a relational definition of God is given. Now, Exodus chapter 3, verse 13.

Remember, the children of Israel are in Egypt and God is beginning his activity, preparatory to bringing Israel out of Egypt through the hands of Moses the mediator. Verse 13, “And Moses said unto God, Behold when I come unto the children of Israel and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers has sent me unto you. They shall say to me, what is his name? What shall I say unto them?” And God said unto Moses, “I AM THAT I AM.” The Greek translation renders that, “I AM WHO I AM.” Can I say anything more than that? “I AM WHO I AM.” Who are you God? “I AM WHO I AM.” He cannot use any human word to adequately define him. So he must simply say, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Thus shall thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM, has sent me unto you.”

Now, when he says of course, “I AM”, he’s talking about the one who is a self-exister. He exists in himself. “I AM.” He does not say someone calls me to be, but “I AM.” The force of his existence is in himself. “I AM.” He possesses all of the powers of life and self-existence in himself. So you simply tell them, “I AM,” has sent you unto them. Verse 15, “And God said moreover unto Moses, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac

and the God of Jacob has sent me unto you. This is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.” Isn’t that interesting? God’s memorial is, “I AM.” “I AM.” Another dead God? I am a living God. That of course, is why the Bible speaks of it as the “living God.”

But notice he says, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.” That’s his relational name. That’s the name whereby he has bound himself to a group of people; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all who are the seed of Abraham. He has bound himself to them. He is their God. Now of course, when he bound himself to Abraham, he bound himself to Abraham by covenant. And so whenever we think of this name of Lord in the Old Testament, Jehovah -- we’re going to say something about that -- we think of the name by which God has bound himself to Israel in covenant. It is the covenant keeping name of God. It is the name by which he reminds them that he has made them promises that he will never, never break. That’s why he says that this is his name forever. So we cannot then give, an absolute definition of God. We can only give a relational one. I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.

I mentioned to you that Charles Hodge once said that, “The definition of God which was given in the shorter catechism in answer to question four, “God is a spirit; infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth,” was the best definition of God that was ever penned by man.” But then -- Professor Hodge was a Presbyterian -- and so you might expect him to say that. But that is a very good description of the major facets of the character and being of God. “God is a spirit; infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.” But it’s inadequate. Capital B: the knowability of the divine being.

Now we have already considered, of course, the knowability of God. But since we are talking about the divine being, we must briefly consider again, what we mean when we talk about the knowability of the divine being. Now remember, when we talk

about knowing God, we must distinguish two words. And those two words are, “comprehending” and “knowing.” Theologians distinguish between them. They say we can “know” but we cannot “comprehend.” Now, “comprehending” God is the word that refers to his absolute being. We cannot “comprehend” the essence of God. That’s beyond us. We can never do it. I don’t think -- and this is speculation -- I don’t think that when we get to heaven we shall ever -- down through the ages of eternity -- I don’t think we shall ever know, in the sense of “comprehend”. We shall never “comprehend,” never be able to put it all together -- the essence of God. We’ll always be learning things about God throughout all eternity. And I’m kind of glad it’s that way, because it makes it more interesting.

I’ve often thought, “What are we going to do when we get to heaven if we know everything when we arrive?” Why, it’s just the beginning of eternal revelation of the character of God when we get there. We enter the heavenly school then, and we’re going to learn and appreciate, and adore, and worship throughout all eternity. And serve too, of course, the Bible says. Though we cannot really then comprehend God. And I want to show you, by the way, how the Scriptures express this. And these are some of the things I think that we overlook in our evangelical circles.

Now, I’m going to ask you if you will, to turn with me to the Book of Ezekiel. And I know it’s kind of unfair to turn to the Book of Ezekiel, but nevertheless, it’s in the Bible, and perhaps one of the reasons we have not appreciated God as we should, is because we have neglected some of the great books of the prophets. And Ezekiel is one of them. Now, I want you to notice how in the first chapter of this book, when Ezekiel is given this great vision of the living creatures and the glory of God. I want you to note, by the way, that’s the Old Testament. Some of you are having a little difficulty finding it. And if you wait just a minute, I’ll tell you the book in front of it. It’s Lamentations. And Daniel follows it. At least it did when I memorized the order of the books of the Bible. Ezekiel.

Now, in chapter 1, notice how Ezekiel is given this tremendous vision of the living creatures, these angelic beings, which he describes for us. And then he’s given a vision of the glory of God. Now I want you to notice how a prophet whom we think of as a man who speaks definitely and dogmatically; suddenly begins to use some very familiar little expressions -- which we often use. And one of them is the little word, “as.” And the other is the word, “like,” because it’s very difficult for him really to describe what he sees. It’s almost as if he’s seeing something he cannot really describe. So will you notice now, first of all, verse 5.

I’ll just pick out one or two verses. “Also out of the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures and this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.” The “likeness of a man.” Verse 10. “As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and a face of a lion, on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; and they four also had the face of an eagle.” Verse 13, “As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps; it went up and down among the living creatures, and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.”

We have a little difficulty with angelic beings, but now let’s notice verse 26, and the closer he gets to God, the more difficult it becomes for him to be definite in his teaching. Verse 26. “And above the firmament that was over their heads, was the likeness of a throne, like the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.” In other words, he sees something like a throne, and there’s something like something else upon that thing, that’s like a throne. So he’s having more and more difficulty explaining.

“And I saw the color of amber, like the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance, and “it were,” notice, “as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.” Like the appearance of the bow

that it is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. “And when I saw it, I fell upon my face and heard a voice of one that spoke.” So you can see that, so far as really comprehending the vision that Ezekiel saw, he has difficulty in putting in human speech the greatness of the God whom he had seen.

Nicholas of Cusa, a medieval saint, once said this, “The intellect knows it, that it is ignorant of thee because it knoweth thou canst not be known, unless the unknowable could be known, and the invisible beheld, and the inaccessible attained.” But you see we’re living in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. And what do we want to do? Now we want to reduce God to manageable time. We want to bring him down into our lives in such a way that we can use him. We can use him to satisfy all of our petty little needs. And so we’ve lost the concept of this great God who sits upon a throne; I’m speaking of course, only anthropomorphically. This great God who sits upon a throne, whose being we cannot really comprehend. And we cannot really fully know, and who is great and awe-inspiring in his holiness, in his righteousness, in his justice, and of course, in his punishment of sin.

Now I think we’ve lost a tremendous truth when we’ve lost these truths. Now I know it’s very important for us to be practical in our theological teaching, but I don’t think there’s anything more practical than to discover just exactly the kind of God with whom we are dealing. Because I think it makes a great difference when the issues of life come before us, and we realize he’s not a God that we can placate with our petty little ideas about him.

As a matter of fact, most of us sitting in this room are idolaters anyway. Do you know why? Because we have a wrong conception of God. In consequence, we’ve set up a God which is not really like God -- and that’s a monstrous sin -- to believe that a God, who’s not quite like God, though God is incomprehensible in his absolute meaning. Let’s never forget it.

That other word is that we may “know” him. Now of course, we cannot know him in the sense of knowing all about him. And if we can say, as far as absolute knowledge is concerned, he is incomprehensible; still we can know him in a relative way. Now, I don’t mean by that, that we can know part of him here and part of him there, and part of him somewhere else. But I mean simply, that we can really know him though we do not know all of him. Now, this is I say, a real knowledge.

How do we know God really? Well, we know him by his attributes for one thing. That’s the way we know him abstractly. We know his holiness, his righteousness, his justice, his goodness, his love and so on; but we also know him concretely, in Jesus Christ. Now, that’s what our text in John chapter 8, verse 19 said. Take a look at it again. It’s a text, which expresses a truth that Jesus says more than once in the Gospel of John. Verse 19, “Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor know my Father. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.” So while we cannot know God in his being -- he is incomprehensible in his being - - we can really know him in measure, in his attributes and pre-eminently, in Jesus Christ. For in Jesus Christ we see all of his attributes enthroned in a life. And every one of them you can see; the justice of God, the holiness of God, the goodness of God, the righteousness of God. That God is great, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient. All of these things ultimately, we can see in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father. He has declared him John says in chapter 1, verse 18. So we can know him relatively, not absolutely.

Let’s move on now, to the name of God. Roman 2. The names of God. Now when we talk about names, after we’ve just talked about what we’ve talked about, well, that seems to constitute a difficulty. We’ve just said, for example, that God is incomprehensible, and yet he deigns to use a name for himself. And names are something that we use. So we say he is incomprehensible but at the same time, he uses

to describe himself, things that are human. Names. But remember -- I would really like for you to get this in your notes because I think this is important. You’d expect a Calvinist of course, to stress this. But I want you to notice from the word of God, that these names that the Bible speaks about, are not inventions of men. They’re not inventions of men.

Did you notice, by the way, that God never called himself the supreme being? That’s what we call him. The man upstairs. Can you imagine anything more ridiculous than God that sends us the word; call me “the man upstairs”? All of these names that are given in the Bible are names that ultimately, come from God. They are not the inventions of men. They are God’s way of seeking to help us along -- we were just little children in the knowledge of God -- to help us on to the understanding of him. But they are given also in the confident assurance that they do tell us really, something about God. And when we read that he is the Lord, when we read that he is God, when we read that he is El Shaddai -- the almighty God -- he’s really telling us things that really do pertain to him. These are things we can comprehend, and they are true, though we cannot comprehend everything.

You know often; you know people this way. I knew the men who meant an awful lot to me. For example, Donald Grey Barnhouse, who was the man who brought me to the Lord. I knew him quite well, I thought. We had lots of times together. We discussed some things that were rather intimate. Many years ago when he wanted me to come with him on the radio program, and carry on other ministry with him, we had some very, very close discussion. But you know, I’m still learning things about Donald Grey Barnhouse. I learn them from other friends. And constantly, I learn about him.

Now God gives us many little hints about himself in his name. They do not tell us everything about him, but they tell us some definite, real, factual information that we can trust about him. Now we want to look first at the Old Testament names, and this is really a tremendous subject. If you’ve read much in the Bible at all, you will remember that in

the Old Testament, many, many names are given of God. And not only are there many different names of God, but there are compounds of the names of God.

For example, he is called “God.” He is called “The Lord.” He’s also called “The Lord God.” And then there are other names or words that are attached to the name of God. He is called “Jehovah that healeth thee.” He is called “Jehovah Kanna, Jehovah Nissi; Jehovah Ganan. He is called Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness. He is called Jehovah Rohi, the Lord my shepherd. So not only do we have names of God, we have compounds of the names of God; and then we have descriptive expressions that are attached to the name of God. And I’m not exaggerating a bit when I say that we could consider these names, and we could take one a night, and we’d just spend one hour a night on each one of these names and we’d only touch the top of the subject. The name of God is that big a subject. We cannot of course consider it like that. So we cannot do that much justice to the subject.

But at least I think we can introduce you to the reading of the Bible, and introduce you to some of the concepts that are bound up in these names. And we’re going to look first of all at the primary names. And I put these three primary names over here on the right side. And you will notice that we have “God”, and spell this the way I’ve spelled it. Capital “G,” little “o,” little “d.” And then the second is “LORD,” with four capital letters. L-O-R-D. And then the third is “Lord,” but with a capital “L” and a little “ord.”

Now, if you’ve been very observant in reading the Bible, you would have noticed that the King James Version observes these distinctions. You will find “God” spelled this way. You will find “the LORD,” this way. You will find “the Lord,” this way. And that was their way of trying to distinguish in their translation between the Hebrew names for God that are found in the Old Testament. Now, that is not sufficient for all of the distinctions, but at least the major ones are comprehended by that. Now the three primary names then are: “God,” or El -- if you want to put down the Hebrew word -- it’s

E-L. Or Elohim, E-l-o-h-i-m, that’s the plural often used, however, for the singular. Then there is the word, “LORD” and “Lord”.

Now, let’s take them up one by one and let me erase here. I’ll put them down and we will seek to understand what is being said by them. Now these primary names we will consider first. “God.” “LORD” and “Lord”. Now this word “God,” our Hebrew “El,” this word is a word that stresses the strength, or the power of God. He’s the strong one. And since we have a little time at the moment, let’s look at a passage or so at -- with some of the more significant names. Let’s turn to the first verse of the Bible, at the Book of Genesis. Nobody looks surprised. Genesis chapter 1, verse 1.

Now, I want you to notice as we read these -- I want you to notice how the name of God fits the context in which they are found. Now this word means “the strong one.” “In the beginning, the strong one created the heaven and the earth.” That, by the way, is the word “Elohim.” It’s in the plural here, but the plural often is used for the singular. So we’ll let it go at that. There’s much more that we could say if we were talking to a class in Hebrew, but we’re not, and you should rejoice at that. We’ll just say that the plural is used for the singular. That is “Elohim.” “In the beginning, God -- notice the capital “G,” little “o,” little “d,” “Elohim”. By the way the Scofield Bible has excellent notes in the new edition. I’ve checked quite a few of them and they have excellent notes on the meaning of these names. If you don’t have a Schofield Bible you ought to get one, because you’ll have a great deal of the information that I’m talking to you about tonight if you just have that.

Now the second word is our word “LORD.” Now this is the word that is frequently rendered in the American Standard Version, “Jehovah.” Now I do not have time to talk about this technically. I just want to say this, that the Jews did not pronounce this word. When they came to it in reading, they didn’t pronounce it. They used another word. They used this word -- when they read in their public reading -- this word. And

consequently this word came to be simply, four Hebrew consonants. There they are.

[Writes on overhead]

Now, it so happens that this word is related to the Hebrew word for “to be.” You can see it if I just put it up here like this. “Yah means “to be.” This word is apparently related to it. Scholars have wrestled and debated the question of just what form this is. Is it a noun? Imperfect? Then that word means, “the one who is.” And, thus they would call it, “Yeh-weh?” If it means -- if it is in the [indistinct] stem or the causative stem, it means, “the one who causes to be.” In that case, “Yah-weh”?? And no doubt, you’ve seen in many theologies -- Old Testament theologians, religion books at the university or college -- “Yahweh.”

Now the reason God is called, “Yahweh” in those books is because it’s an attempt to seek to discover what was the original form of this four-letter word, which the Hebrews called the tetragrammaton -- which means the four-letter word that no one pronounced. Now, the reason they didn’t pronounce it was because in Leviticus chapter 24, verse 16, it says something similar to that -- that the person who pronounces the name “Yahweh” or Lord, shall be put to death.

Now, it doesn’t actually say that. It says something about blaspheming the name “Yahweh,” but they thought the name was so holy that to pronounce it, would be guilty of blasphemy. Hence, they never spoke it. So when they came to this word in the text, they would read this word, “Adonai.” Now if that word comes from the word “to be,” I’m inclined to think that it comes from that imperfect, and it means “he who is.” Because you see, God said to Moses, didn’t he; “I AM who I AM?” So I think it’s the word that marks him out as the self-existent, absolute being. And of course it’s his covenant, keeping name. It’s the word that points to him as the unchangeable God. We’ve entered into a relationship, our sacrifice with a certain people. It’s real in the Old Testament; the feet of Abraham in the New.

Now, the third word is the word “Lord.” Now this word, we may spell something like this, “Adonai” or “Adonai.” This word, “Adonai,” is a word that means, basically, “master.” Now since it means “master,” it has the idea of God as a Lord and we are his servants. If you turn over to Genesis chapter 15, verse 2 -- Genesis 15, verse 2. “After these things -- I’ll read verse 1 -- After these things, the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision saying, Fear not Abram; I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is this Eleazer of Damascus?” “Lord God.” Now if you look at that -- if you have a Schofield Bible and you look at the bottom of the page it says, “Adonai Jehovah.” “Lord God.” That is one case where Jehovah is not translated “Lord.” Why? Why is Jehovah not translated “Lord?” Well it’s because of course we already have “Lord.” You wouldn’t say “Lord, Lord” would you? So here they have modified their usual rule. So anyway, this word means “master.”

Now Abram is speaking and he says, “Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is this Eleazer of Damascus?” And in it, Abraham recognizes that he’s the servant of God, and that God is his master, and it is his master who is going to give him an heir. So Lord. Whenever you see “Lord,” think of “master,” and a master-servant relationship.

Now then, we want to look at some words compounded. I want you to notice that these names that are compounded -- that I’m going to give you three of each -- and some of them, some scholars have thought that because they may be easily grouped this way; that even the name of God reflects the Trinity. I think that’s carrying it too far. The names compounded with “El,” or with -- in our English -- with God. And first of all, “El Shaddai.” Well let me put the -- well now, on the left side, we’ll do it this way. “El Shaddai.” Now you can see the “El” is God. And “Shaddai.” Now let’s look up a passage -- Genesis chapter 17, verse 1. Genesis chapter 17, verse 1.

Here’s what we read. “And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram and said unto him, I am Almighty God. Walk before me and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face and God talked with him saying, As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shall be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be called Abraham, for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” “El Shaddai,” the almighty God.

Now, this word is a very interesting word because the word “shad” in Hebrew is the word that is used to refer to the woman’s breast. Consequently, many have thought that this expression refers to God as the “full-breasted God” or “the God who supplies the needs of his people.” The all-sufficient God. And that’s a possible derivation of it. However, most now feel that this word probably is to be derived from the word *chabarab* which means “to destroy.” And the reason is because in Joel chapter 1, verse 15, this word is used; and the word “to destroy” is used, and apparently, there’s a play on words. So if that’s true, then this word is a word that refers to God as “the powerful one.”

But the idea back of it is “the powerful one” -- not so much who produces fear on the part of men -- as “the powerful one,” who uses the forces of nature in order to fulfill his works of grace. And therefore, that word would fit very well into this context because Abraham is being reminded by God of the covenant, and also of the things that God is going to do for him through that covenant. Kings are going to come out of it. He’s going to make him fruitful in the earth; and so on. So “El Shaddai.” Let’s hurry and put these names down.

Secondly, “El Elion” or “the Most High God.” Genesis chapter 14, verses 17 through 24. And this word is a word -- “El Elion” -- which refers to God as “the one who possesses the heaven and the earth.” The most high God. “El Elion.” The one who possesses the heaven and the earth. And then, “El Olam,” the everlasting God. This of course presses his eternity. The everlasting God. “El Olam.” O-L-A-M.

Now finally -- I’ll try to hurry. If you didn’t get it, try to get it from somebody else. Words compounded with “Lord.” Now, this is with “Jehovah.” So we have “Lord God.” “Lord God.” Now, this word of course -- put down Genesis 24 -- this word is a compound in which we find both the idea of a covenant keeping God, and also the powerful God. “Lord God.” And then, “Lord God,” in which we have Genesis 15:2 -- we’ve already put that there with that. Here the master and here the covenant keeping God -- called here “God” instead of “Lord” because of the compound. And finally the word “Lord of Hosts.” Now “Lord of Hosts” -- the hosts are angelic beings, and consequently this term is a term that expresses the fact that in the crises of the needs of his people, he comes with all of the help that heaven can give. He is the “Lord of Hosts.”

Now, the New Testament names are simply the equivalent of these. There is the name “God.” There is the name “Lord,” and there is the name “Father.” This last one is a new name. “God” is equivalent to the God of the Old Testament. “Lord” is equivalent to the Jehovah of the Old Testament, and the Lord, in other words, the covenant keeping God and also the master.

But “Father” in the individual sense, is something new. Never in the Old Testament does anyone speak of God as his “Father,” individually. Israel refers to God as their “Father.” The prophets speak of God as “the Father of Israel.” Israel is called “Israel my Son,” but never is any individual in the Old Testament -- never is there any account of an individual referring to God as his “Father.” Isn’t that interesting? And that makes it so interesting in the New Testament when we hear Jesus say, “Father.” A man has appeared who has the right to call God his “Father.” And wonder of wonders; he instructs us to

pray, “Our Father, which art in heaven.” An amazing thing; now possible through the finished work of the Lord Jesus.

In Proverbs, we read, “The name of Jehovah is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe.” Now, think of all these things; the mighty God, the all-sufficient one, the Lord, the Lord God, Lord the master, Lord the covenant keeping God. All of these names, they’re just descriptive of the kind of God that we have. And if you can comprehend what all of these names mean, then you can comprehend what God can be to you. And also, we can comprehend what God is like in our meetings too. Time’s up. Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for this wonderful revelation of thyself in Thy name. We thank Thee that Thou art the Lord God. Keep covenant with us, and also the all-mighty one. Oh God give us a sense of Thy majesty and Thy greatness.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.