

## The Name of God in General

There are a number of instances where no name of God is employed, but where simply the term “name” in reference to God is used as the point of focus:

- (1) Abraham called on the *name* of the Lord (Gen. 12:8; 13:4).
- (2) The Lord proclaimed His own *name* before Moses (Ex. 33:19; 34:5).
- (3) Israel was warned against profaning the *name* of the Lord (Lev. 13:21; 22:2, 32).
- (4) The *name* of the Lord was not to be taken in vain (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11).
- (5) The priests of Israel were to minister in the *name* of the Lord (Deut. 18:5; 21:5).
- (6) The *name* of God is called “wonderful” in Judges 13:18.
- (7) To call on the *name* of the Lord was to worship Him as God (Gen. 21:33; 26:25).

Consequently, from this we can conclude that such phrases as “the name of the LORD” or “the name of God” refer to God’s whole character. It was a summary statement embodying the entire person of God.

When we turn to the New Testament we find the same. The name *Jesus* is used in a similar way to the name of God in the Old Testament:

- (1) Salvation is through His *name* (John 1:12).
- (2) Believers are to gather in His *name* (Matt. 18:20).
- (3) Prayer is to be made in His *name* (John 14:13-14).
- (4) The servant of the Lord who bears the *name* of Christ will be hated (Matt. 10:22).
- (5) The book of Acts makes frequent mention of worship, service, and suffering in the *name* of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:18; 5:28, 41; 10:43; 19:17).
- (6) It is at the *name* of Jesus that every knee will one day bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil. 2:10-11).

So, just as the name of God in the Old Testament spoke of the holy character of God the Father, so the name of Jesus in the New Testament speaks of the holy character of God the Son.

## Overview of the Names of God in Scripture

(1) **Elohim:** The plural form of *EL*, meaning “strong one.” It is used of false gods, but when used of the true God, it is a plural of majesty and intimates the trinity. It is especially used of God’s sovereignty, creative work, mighty work for Israel and in relation to His sovereignty (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 32:27; Gen. 1:1; Isa. 45:18; Deut. 5:23; 8:15; Ps. 68:7).

Compounds of *El*:

- **El Shaddai:** “God Almighty.” The derivation is uncertain. Some think it stresses God’s loving supply and comfort; others His power as the Almighty one standing on a mountain and who corrects and chastens (Gen. 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; Ex. 6:31; Ps. 91:1, 2).
- **El Elyon:** “The Most High God.” Stresses God’s strength, sovereignty, and supremacy (Gen. 14:19; Ps. 9:2; Dan. 7:18, 22, 25).
- **El Olam:** “The Everlasting God.” Emphasizes God’s unchangeableness and is connected with His inexhaustibility (Gen. 16:13).

(2) **Yahweh (YHWH):** Comes from a verb which means “to exist, be.” This, plus its usage, shows that this name stresses God as the independent and self-existent God of revelation and redemption (Gen. 4:3; Ex. 6:3 (cf. 3:14); 3:12).

Compounds of *Yahweh*: Strictly speaking, these compounds are designations or titles which reveal additional facts about God’s character.

- **Yahweh Jireh (Yireh):** “The Lord will provide.” Stresses God’s provision for His people (Gen. 22:14).
- **Yahweh Nissi:** “The Lord is my Banner.” Stresses that God is our rallying point and our means of victory; the one who fights for His people (Ex. 17:15).
- **Yahweh Shalom:** “The Lord is Peace.” Points to the Lord as the means of our peace and rest (Jud. 6:24).
- **Yahweh Sabaoth:** “The Lord of Hosts.” A military figure portraying the Lord as the commander of the armies of heaven (1 Sam. 1:3; 17:45).
- **Yahweh Maccaddeshcem:** “The Lord your Sanctifier.” Portrays the Lord as our means of sanctification or as the one who sets believers apart for His purposes (Ex. 31:13).
- **Yahweh Ro’i:** “The Lord my Shepherd.” Portrays the Lord as the Shepherd who cares for His people as a shepherd cares for the sheep of his pasture (Ps. 23:1).
- **Yahweh Tsidkenu:** “The Lord our Righteousness.” Portrays the Lord as the means of our righteousness (Jer. 23:6).
- **Yahweh Shammah:** “The Lord is there.” Portrays the Lord’s personal presence in the millennial kingdom (Ezek. 48:35).
- **Yahweh Elohim Israel:** “The Lord, the God of Israel.” Identifies Yahweh as the God of Israel in contrast to the false gods of the nations (Jud. 5:3.; Isa. 17:6).

(3) **Adonai:** Like *Elohim*, this too is a plural of majesty. The singular form means “master, owner.” Stresses man’s relationship to God as his master, authority, and provider (Gen. 18:2; 40:1; 1 Sam. 1:15; Ex. 21:1-6; Josh. 5:14).

(4) **Theos:** Greek word translated “God.” Primary name for God used in the New Testament. Its use teaches: (1) *He is the only true God* (Matt. 23:9; Rom. 3:30); (2) *He is unique* (1 Tim. 1:17; John 17:3; Rev. 15:4; 16:27); (3) *He is transcendent* (Acts 17:24; Heb. 3:4; Rev. 10:6); (4) *He is the Savior* (John 3:16; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; 4:10). This name is used of Christ as God in John 1:1, 18; 20:28; 1 John 5:20; Tit. 2:13; Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:1.

(5) **Kurios:** Greek word translated “Lord.” Stresses authority and supremacy. While it can mean sir (John 4:11), owner (Luke 19:33), master (Col. 3:22), or even refer to idols (1 Cor. 8:5) or husbands (1 Pet. 3:6), it is used mostly as the equivalent of *Yahweh* of the Old Testament. It too is used of Jesus Christ meaning (1) Rabbi or Sir (Matt. 8:6); (2) God or Deity (John 20:28; Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9; Phil. 2:11).

(6) **Despotes:** Greek word translated “Master.” Carries the idea of ownership while *kurios* stressed supreme authority (Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24; Rev. 6:10; 2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 4).

(7) **Father:** A distinctive New Testament revelation is that through faith in Christ, God becomes our personal Father. Father is used of God in the Old Testament only 15 times while it is used of God 245 times in the New Testament. As a name of God, it stresses God’s loving care, provision, discipline, and the way we are to address God in prayer (Matt. 7:11; Jam. 1:17; Heb. 12:5-11; John 15:16; 16:23; Eph. 2:18; 3:15; 1 Thess. 3:11).