

LESSON 44 - THE NAME

What Is God's Name and How Can We Be Sure Not To Misuse It?

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In Jeremiah 23:26-27 God says, *"How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets... They think the dreams they tell one another will make my people forget my name, just as their ancestors forgot my name through Baal worship."* In Exodus 20:7 God gave Moses His Ten Commandments and said, *"You shall not misuse the name of the **LORD** your God, for the **LORD** will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name."* God wants us to remember, honor and proclaim His name in all the earth (Romans 9:17). Jesus came in His Father's name - and the works He did in His Father's name - testified about Him (John 5:43, 10:25). This lesson covers: 1) What *is* God's name?, 2) Does God require us to use one specific name?, 3) How can we be sure not to misuse God's name?

1. What is God's Name? Is it God, God Almighty, Allah (the Arabic word for "God"), Lord, Jehovah, Yahweh, God Most High, I Am, or something else? Exodus 3:13-15 reads, *"Moses said to God, 'Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?' God said to Moses, '**I AM WHO I AM.** This is what you are to say to the Israelites: '**I AM** has sent me to you.'*" God also said to Moses, *"Say to the Israelites, 'The **LORD**, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.' "This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation."* God said, "I am who I am" or "I will be what I will be." He then shortens it: "I Am." God wants His people to know that He, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the one, eternal, self-existent, self-sufficient being. He simply *is*. The New Testament shows that "I Am" was understood by religious Jews as a name that meant God. It's worth noting that Jesus used the name "I Am" for *Himself* prior to His incarnation as a man and was almost stoned for claiming to be God. John 8:56-59 He said to the Jewish leaders, *"Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."* "You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, *"and you have seen Abraham!"* "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, *"before Abraham was born, I am!"* At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds." While God told Moses to announce Him to the Israelites as "I Am," He had also given Moses a specific, unique name for Himself. Exodus 6:2-3 shows God provided this as a way to bring His people closer to Him: *"God also said to Moses, '**I am the LORD.** I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as **GOD ALMIGHTY**, but by my name the **LORD** I did not make myself **FULLY KNOWN** to them."* This name the Bible puts as "Lord" in all capital letters, indicating that it's God's sacred name there. The sacred name of God is recorded in the Bible over 6,800 times. It's the four Hebrew letters Y.H.V.H. (Yud, Hey, Vav, Hey).

Known as the “Tetragrammaton,” they are transliterated into the Latin alphabet as YHWH. These four letters form the root meaning “to be,” with the original meaning “He-Who-Is” or “He who brings being into being.” God’s name was respectfully considered unutterable for being too holy by ancient Masoretic Jews and they were afraid of misusing it. So, YHWH was written with the vowel marks for *Adonai* (meaning “my Lord”) underneath, for this to be read aloud. The original pronunciation has been lost but Bible scholars have tried to reconfigure the consonants of the sacred name and put in vowels. The name *Jehovah* for the proper name of God is commonly used in English, however YeHoWah would be closer to a correct pronunciation. Most scholars agree the best estimation of the Hebrew original is Yahweh (YaH-WaY). “Yah” is an abbreviated form of this. It’s where the word “Hallelu-yah” comes from, which means “Glory be/Praise be Yah.” While Bible translations do preserve YHWH everywhere it occurs, most translations continue to substitute the word **LORD**, in all caps and in a different font.

2. Does God Require Us To Use Only One Specific Name? No. Consider what a name is for. If I remembered and pronounced your name correctly but then got all the facts wrong about who you are, what you care about, and everything you’ve done, do I know you? No! God desires us to know *who* He is, *what* He’s like, *what* He’s done, and *what* His will is. He wants us to live for His glory, using our lives to be and do things that glorify Him. He wants us to see and declare His glory among the nations (Isaiah 66:19). He desires us to personally, intimately know Him and love Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength (Mark 12:29-30). He wants us to know Him, through Jesus, as our Heavenly Father who has adopted us, and for us to worship Him in Spirit and truth (John 4:24). The correct pronunciation of His name won’t provide any of this. What is much more important is that we have a right knowledge and relationship with Him. All this we receive—not through the sacred name—but through Jesus! Jesus said in John 17:25-26, *“Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. I have made you [literally in the Greek, “Your Name”] known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”* God’s name—the essence of who and all that He is—is revealed in Jesus. Jesus is the logos, image and word of the invisible God. Jesus is the name above all names (Philippians 2:9-11). Acts 4:8-12 says, *“Know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. Jesus is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.’ Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”*

3. How Can We Be Sure Not To Misuse God’s Name? Never blaspheme or use His name in vain. Don’t casually use His name unless you’re talking to or about Him. Don’t say “Oh my God” or “Jesus Christ” as an expletive. You wouldn’t even use your own mother’s name to express shock! Don’t call out Jesus unless you’re *proclaiming* the name of our Savior! Hold God in your highest esteem and affections. Love Him above everything trying to compete for your attention and devotion! Glorify Him with your heart’s desires, words, actions, and life. Learn about Him in truth through His Word (the Bible). Grow in your relationship with Him through prayer and life *with* Him. Worship Him in Spirit and be led by His Holy Spirit.

Let’s pray. Yahweh, Lord God Almighty, maker of Heaven and earth. May Your name be glorified and exalted! I worship You in Spirit and truth. In the name of the Father, Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit. Amen.