

LIVING FAITH CHAPEL OF SPC
The Doctrine of God: Lesson Three¹
The Names of God

- A. God's name is synonymous with God Himself.
1. Old Testament examples: Ex. 20:7; Ps. 8:1.
 2. New Testament example: in the Lord's Prayer we say "Hallowed be your name" In other words, we ask and desire that God would be honored.
 3. Because of this, His name is "wonderful" (or incomprehensible) for God is beyond understanding (Judg. 13:18).
- B. On the one hand we cannot name Him, on the other hand He has many names (El, Elohim, Adonai, etc.)
- C. It is important to point out that the names of God are not a human invention but have a divine origin, although they borrow from human language. The naming of God is a condescension on God's part to reveal Himself to man. God's names are a revelation of who He is. They are little Bibles.
1. Naming someone, especially in biblical times was a demonstration of authority. For example: When God created and named creation, when Adam named the animals it was an act of dominion over them, when God changed Abraham's name. Therefore, no man has named God.
- D. Dr. Bavinck distinguished between the proper names (e.g. Yahweh, Adonai, etc.), the essential names (i.e. his attributes), and the personal names of God (i.e. Father, Son, Spirit). We will deal with the first class of names.
- E. NAMES OF GOD
1. Old Testament
 - a. El or Elohim (pl.) – strong & mighty. Elohim is plural and therefore intensive. It conveys the fullness of God's power. However, it is also a reference to idols or false gods.
 - b. Elyon – high and exalted one; Gen. 14:18. Often translated "God Most High"
 - c. Adonai – almighty ruler, to whom everything is subject and to whom man is related as a servant. For reasons of reverence, it replaced Yahweh.
 - d. El-Shaddai – power; God possessing all power in heaven and on earth. While it stresses the greatness of God, it does not represent Him as the object of fear, but a source of comfort and blessing. It is the name with which God appeared to Abraham (Ex. 6:3). Often translated "God Almighty."

¹ Significant portions adopted from Louis Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*.

- e. Yahweh – God reveals Himself as the God of Israel and the God of grace.
 - i. In radical application of Lev. 24:16; Jews did not even utter the name.
 - ii. Most sacred and distinctive name of God.
 - iii. The word “LORD” (in capital letters) is the English reference to “Yahweh.”
 - iv. Most likely derived from Exodus 3:13-15. Seems to be derived from the Hebrew verb hayah meaning “to be.” The name points to the unchangeableness of God (not necessarily His eternity), but not simply in His essential being, but his unchangeableness of His relation to His people. The name contains the assurance that God will be for the people of Moses’ day what He was for their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It stresses God’s faithfulness.
 - v. The word Jehovah came by combining the Yahweh consonants with Adonai vowels.

2. The New Testament

- a. Kurios – the Greek equivalent of Adonai. Derived from kuros meaning power. Designates God as the Mighty One, the Ruler who has legal power and authority. It is used for Christ and God. It is the great confession that “Jesus is Lord.”
- b. Theos – the Greek equivalent of El, Elohim, and Elyon