

New Vision
The Names of God: Intro and Elohim
Genesis 1: Psalm 8:1-4
04/24/2019

Teaching notes

ELOHIM

A. Usage

The term Elohim occurs in the general sense of deity about 2,570 times in the Old Testament. About 2,310 times it is a name for the true God.

B. Meaning

The meaning of Elohim depends on its derivation. Some understand that it comes from a root that means fear and indicates that the deity is to be feared, revered, or worshiped. Others trace it to a root that means strong, indicating a deity of great power.

C. The Plural Form

What then does it mean that this is written in a plural form?

1. It is a trinitarian plural; When we think about creation, we can see how God revealed in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all involved.
2. It is a majestic plural. This plural of majesty denotes God's unlimited greatness and supremacy. The fact that the Bible shows how God spoke the world into existence shows how His power is great and glorious.

D. Relationships of This Name

If this name of God means the Strong One and occurs in a majestic plural, one would expect that it would be used in relation to His greatness and mighty acts.

1. In relation to His sovereignty. Elohim is used to describe Him as the "God of all the earth" (Isa. 54:5), the "God of all flesh" (Jer. 32:27), the "God of heaven" (Neh. 2:4), and the "God of gods and the Lord of lords" (Deut. 10:17).
2. In relation to His work of Creation. He is the Elohim who created all things (Gen. 1:1; Isa. 45:18; Jon. 1:9).
3. In relation to His judging (Pss. 50:6; 58:11).
4. In relation to His mighty works on behalf of Israel (Deut. 5:23; 8:15; Ps. 68:7).

E. What does Elohim mean to me today?

1. God's power is amazing.

We look at the wonder of creation every day and we can see His glory. And our hearts should be in awe at His wondrous works. But we can also see that the same God that spoke the world into existence desires to still show His power today.

2. God's nearness is humbling.

The fact that the God who has done great and amazing things beyond our comprehension can seem like He is distant. Yes God is not limited to time or space or matter, but that doesn't mean that He is not near. He desires a relationship with us through Jesus Christ and that should be awesome and humbling at the same time!

Group Discussion

| Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1.

God created both heaven and earth. The original word used for God in this verse is "Elohim." Here, in the first verse of the first chapter of the first book of the Bible, God shakes our hands and introduces Himself as Elohim. The word means "strong one." Our God is the Strong One, the Creator God. When you're up against a wall, the Strong One who made heaven and earth is at your side. Remember that no matter the opposition, our God uses infants and toddlers to shame His enemies. The Strong One makes weak things strong.

What does this one verse tell us about God?

What does this verse tell us about creation?

What attributes of God come to mind when you think of God as Creator?

What elements of creation remind you of God's character the most? Where can you see the fingerprints of God within nature?

| Have a volunteer read Genesis 1:26-27.

For all eternity, God has existed as one Spirit in three persons. God is triune—He is one and yet also a perfect plurality of majesty, honor, and fullness. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit have existed for all eternity and together created the world out of nothing. Elohim is not the chief or even the best among many gods, He is the one living and true God and everything that exists was created by Him and for His glory.

The word for "God" in these verses is the Hebrew word "Elohim," a plural noun. Why does God speak of Himself in the first-person plural in verse 26: "Let us make man in our image"?

Read Deuteronomy 10:17 and Psalm 136:2. How is God described in these verses?

| Have a volunteer read Psalm 8:1-4.

God is the ultimate being. He has no beginning because He has always been and always will be God. He depends on nothing in order to exist, while everything in creation depends on

Him for its existence. This name implies that He is above all things—He is wiser and more beautiful and wonderful than everything everywhere. All creation exists to praise Him.

**Based on the tone and wording of the first two verses of this Psalm, how do you think David viewed his relationship with God?
According to David, where is the glory of the Lord?**

God's majesty is highlighted in verse 2 in that God not only stoops to care and provide for infants, but that He makes them the means of His triumphs. God could conquer His enemies in any number of dramatic and powerful ways, but He instead chooses to overcome them through the praises of children and nursing babies. This is an incredibly important theme in the Bible—God triumphs not through grand displays of power but through profound and mysterious displays of humility.

**How might holding a newborn in your arms move you to worship God?
What is peculiar about the picture of infants triumphing over God's enemies?
Why does God use infants to triumph over His enemies? What does this prove or accomplish?**

God's name is holy, meaning He is set apart. He is unlike anyone or anything else in all creation. David glimpsed this holiness when He looked to the heavens and wondered aloud why God would even think about humankind. In the first two verses we read that the glory of the Lord is in the heavens, but David also noted that God's majesty fills the earth. God's glory fills the skies and stretches across the universe in all directions, but His majesty isn't so far away that we can't savor the glory and power of His name here on earth. Although we may sometimes feel small, we can enjoy the majesty of God because He is a personal God. We can know Him and be known by Him. As David noted, he is the Lord, our Lord.

**What motivated David to ask, "of what importance is the human race, that you should notice them?"
Can you relate to what David is feeling? When was a time when you felt small or insignificant in the presence of God and his creation?**

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Why is it important to know the names of the Lord?

How might your perspective on your place in the universe begin to change if you focused more on the names of the Lord?

Considering that God the Creator is Elohim, the Strong One, how might this change the way you face opposition?