

Names of God
Session 2: Yahweh
Exodus 3:1-15
05/01/2019

Teaching Notes

YAHWEH

The second basic name for God is the personal one, YHWH, the Lord, or Yahweh. It is the most frequently used name, occurring about 5,321 times in the Old Testament.

A. Origin of the Word

The name signifies existence or active. Both ideas can be combined in the significance of God's name by saying that it denotes Him as the active, self-existent One.

B. Revelation of the Name

It was to Moses that the deep significance of the name was revealed. God said that even though He appeared to the patriarchs He was not known to them by His name Yahweh (Exod. 6:3). This revelation came to Moses at the burning bush when God identified Himself as "I AM WHO I AM" (3:14), the principal idea being that God was present with the people of Israel.

C. Sacredness of the Name

Since Yahweh was God's personal name by which He was known to Israel, in post-exilic times it began to be considered so sacred that it was not pronounced.

D. Significance of the Name

Several facets seem to be included in the significance of the name Yahweh.

1. It emphasizes God's changeless self-existence. This may be supported by the etymology and from the Lord's use of Exodus 3:14 in John 8:58 to state His claim to absolute eternal existence.
2. It assures God's presence with His people. See Exodus 3:12.
3. It is connected with God's power to work on behalf of His people and to keep His covenant with them, which was illustrated and confirmed by His work in their deliverance from Egypt (Exod. 6:6).

E. Compounds with the Name

Strictly speaking, these compounds are not additional names of God, but designations or titles that often grew out of commemorative events. However, they do reveal additional facets of the character of God.

1. Yahweh Jireh, “the Lord Will Provide” (Gen. 22:14). After the Angel of the Lord pointed to a ram to use as a substitute for Isaac, Abraham named the place “the Lord Will Provide.”
2. Yahweh Nissi, “the Lord is My Banner” (Exod. 17:15). After the defeat of the Amalekites, Moses erected an altar and called it Yahweh Nissi.
3. Yahweh Shalom, “the Lord is Peace” (Judg. 6:24).
4. Yahweh Sabbaoth, “the Lord of hosts” (1 Sam. 1:3). This is a military figure that pictures Yahweh as the Commander of the angelic armies of heaven as well as the armies of Israel (1 Sam. 17:45). The title reveals the sovereignty and omnipotence of God and was used often by the prophets (Isaiah and Jeremiah) to remind the people during times of national crisis that God was their Leader and Protector.
5. Yahweh Maccaddeshcem, “the Lord who sanctifies you” (Exod. 31:13).
6. Yahweh Roi, “the Lord is my shepherd” (Ps. 23:1).
7. Yahweh Tsidkenu, “the Lord our righteousness” (Jer. 23:6).
8. Yahweh Shammah, “the Lord is there” (Ezek. 48:35).
9. Yahweh Elohim Israel “the Lord, the God of Israel” (Judg. 5:3; Isa. 17:6).

Group Discussion

| Have a volunteer read Exodus 3:1-10.

Moses responded to the initial call of God in the right way—he yielded himself fully to whatever God wanted him to do. He was no longer the brash and impetuous man who killed the Egyptian. He was instead the humble shepherd who had an appropriate lack of confidence in his own abilities. When God calls us today, we should have the same attitude of putting ourselves fully at God’s disposal to do with us as He wants.

Put yourself in Moses’ place. How would you respond if you saw what he saw? What does Moses response to God in verse 4 indicate about his heart? How does this show how he had changed during his time as a shepherd? Is there anything in your life that would keep you from putting yourself fully at God’s disposal? How does being fully at God’s disposal change the way you approach your day-to-day life and activities?

Moses took off his shoes because of the holiness of God. Because God is holy, He is completely separate from anything else we could ever encounter. And yet He is the faithful God. It’s immensely comforting to know that just as God was the God of unfaithful men like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He will still be faithful to us even when we are unfaithful.

God revealed both His holiness and faithfulness to Moses in these verses. What implications does God's holiness have for us as His people? What about His faithfulness? Why should God's faithfulness give us comfort and confidence?

| Have a volunteer read Exodus 3:11-15.

We can understand and identify with Moses' doubts in these verses. Who wouldn't have some questions when challenged in the way God called Moses? But the real question with Moses and with us is not so much about who we are; it's about who God is. If we truly grasped the greatness of the One who goes with us, then we would live in a state of courage and confidence not based in ourselves but based in Him.

Have you ever asked God a question like Moses did, wondering how He could ask someone so unqualified to do something for Him? Why didn't God answer Moses' question? How does God's answer show us the true path to freedom?

Application

What circumstance in your life is making you feel trapped right now?

What part of God's character is He calling you to focus on instead of those circumstances?

How can looking to the cross of Jesus remind you of those characteristics of God?

What is one specific way you are going to discipline yourself to take your focus off yourself and your circumstances and put it instead on God and His character?