



Connecting with God for a Strong Finish

CHAPTER 21

God has a Name—and it's not God

Are you offended by the fact that you may not know God as well as you think you do? How well do you know Him? Is God a living being or an ethereal concept? Is He an abiding person or an elusive presence? Do you engage Him with familiar closeness or with aloof detachment? Do you relate with intimate feeling or under a vague illusion? Are you on a first name basis with Him? Do you even know God's name?

Agur poses this question in Proverbs 30: *"What is his name, and what is his son's name? Surely you know!"*¹ God has a name and it is not God. You probably know Jesus the Son of Man, but how often do you mention the name of your Heavenly Father? Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Father, hallowed be Your name."² When was the last time you addressed Him by name?

The word God is a common noun not a proper name. Like angels, demons, and humans, it is a category of being. When our Heavenly Father addresses you, He does not call you human. He calls you by name. He calls the angels Michael and Gabrielle by name. If you know His name, why do you call Him God? Is it because you respect Him so much or is it because He is too holy?

¹ Proverbs 30:4 ESV

² Luke 11:2 NAS

After encountering “God’s” presence near a burning bush, Moses asked a reasonable question.

*“If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘**What is his name?**’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.”*

God instructed Moses to say His name audibly. He said,

*“**Say this** to the people of Israel, ‘**I AM** [Hebrew, YHWH] has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The LORD [Jehovah], the God [Elohiym] 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, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.** (Exo 3:13-15 ESV)*

Have we Forgotten God’s Name?

God identified Himself as YHWH, which means I AM in English. YHWH is a four-letter Tetragrammaton, which occurs 6,828 times in the Hebrew text, both in the *Biblia Hebraica* and in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Its pronunciation without vowels remains uncertain though God told Moses to “say” it to Israel.

Second Century Church Fathers along with various Greek transcriptions claim the pronunciation is Yahweh.³ The Hebrew pronunciation for each letter (Y-H-W-H) is Yōd-Hey-Văv-Hey.

Titles such as `Elohim (God, or Authority), Jehovah (Lord), El (Mighty One), El Shaddai (Almighty), Adonai (Lord or Master), and Elyon (Most High) are not names.⁴ They highlight important aspects of YHWH by describing His attributes, status, or role. While Bible scholars and theologians debate God’s titles and descriptions, YHWH remains His proper name. He clearly stated to Moses that YHWH is His name forever by which He is “*to be remembered throughout all generations*”.

³ See the writings of Clement of Alexandria

⁴ Commonly denoted in various academic sources

Throughout this book, God with a capital G refers to YHWH as it does in most English Bibles. At some point, the decision was made to stop saying His name, perhaps out of reverence—akin to worship characterized by something we stop doing. After addressing Him as God for so long, it may seem awkward if we start addressing Him as YHWH or as I AM.

Our lack of reverence often begins with a mistaken identity. YHWH challenges our thinking when He said, “*you thought that I was altogether like you*”.⁵ We are made in God’s image but He is not like us. Paul places the blame on willful ignorance. Writing to the Romans, He describes what happens when individuals deprive God of the honor that He deserves. Simply put, they go stupid. The consequences are detrimental and they accumulate with punitive force.

*For even though **they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator...*** (Romans 1:21-25 NAS)

Knowing the truth about YHWH carries a sacred responsibility to honor Him—not as a special person but as God. He is the I AM who created the heavens and the earth. As the author and sustainer of life, He clarifies reality with eternal precision.

As creator, YHWH sees us just as we are, well informed, misinformed, or uninformed. Then He proceeds to illuminate our understanding with supernatural insight. Sometimes He finds us plagued with

⁵ Psalms 50:21 NKJ, NIV

doubts, desperate for help, broken by sin, or infested with demons. Regardless of our state of being, God always deserves a response of reverence.

Each gesture of worship reflects our perception of God's worth. It conveys degrees of veneration, proportional to the revelation that we have received. As we progress from abbreviated estimates to well-informed encounters, our worship will gain added meaning and deliberate intension.

