

GOD

Everybody has a name. Every individual man, woman, boy and girl has a name. My personal name is Gregory. Gregory happens to mean 'watchful'. I don't mind if you call me Greg ... in fact, the only person who ever called me Gregory was my mother and then I knew I was in trouble because it was always said in a firm tone with an exclamation mark after it! Your name represents you, the real person, your 'self'. I have known many people get quite upset when their rightful personal name is forgotten, altered, not spelled right, etc.

In the Bible God has gone to a lot of trouble to reveal His Personal Name to us. Some 6,828 times the one and only God of the Bible is called Yahweh. This number does not include the 49 occurrences of "Yah" (a shortened version, much like Greg is short for Gregory) nor the many expressions of "Hallelujah" (or Hallelu-Yah) meaning 'praise Yah'.

In the original Hebrew Bible Yahweh is written using the four consonants YHWH. There are no vowels written in the Hebrew text. These four consonants are called the Tetragrammaton meaning 'four letters'. Because there are no vowels in the text, and because the Jews stopped pronouncing the Name for fear they might inadvertently blaspheme it, today there is some

debate as to how to pronounce YHWH. However, the authoritative *Encyclopedia Judaica* states the original pronunciation was Yahweh and has never been lost. In any case, there is no prohibition in Scripture for us to stop using, or not to continue to use God's Name. On the contrary, His people are told to "Give thanks to Yahweh; proclaim His name! Celebrate His works among the peoples. Declare that his name is exalted" (Is. 12:4).

So, Yahweh's Name on average appears over 6 times per page in the Old Testament! The preponderance of the Name of God is a powerful testimony as to the identity of the God of the Bible. Yahweh is the central and most important Person in the Bible.

There are places in the Bible where God actually calls Himself a "Soul", which is the equivalent of 'Self'. In Isaiah 42:1 God speaks of "My Soul". The Hebrew *nephesh* here translated 'soul' is used consistently to mean an individual, that is, a single self, whether animal, human or God Himself. Yahweh describes himself as a Single Individual Soul, a "Self". This fact is verified thousands of times throughout the Bible, not only by the use of His Personal Name, but also by personal pronouns.

Whenever God speaks of Himself or is addressed or referred to by others, singular personal pronouns are used. When referring to Himself God says, 'I',

'Me', 'My', 'Mine' in the first person. When He is prayed to He is addressed in the second person singular, 'Thou', 'Thee', 'Thy' or 'Thine', but this is old English, and not so obvious today because our 'you' can be either singular or plural in meaning depending on context and whether the attending verbs and pronouns are singular or plural. Then, when someone refers to God indirectly, the third person singular 'He', 'Him', 'His', 'Himself' are invariably used.

Language has no stronger way of conveying that the God of the Bible is a Single Personal Self when it uses thousands and thousands of singular personal pronouns with singular verbs in conjunction with His Personal Name! (There are only four exceptions to this overwhelming rule. In those four exceptions God uses what Bible scholars call the royal courtly language, "Let us ..." These four are not exceptions that prove God is after all a plurality of Persons. They are easily explained in their particular contexts.) The fact is, in the Old Testament, Yahweh never refers to more than one Individual God and certainly not a trinity of Persons.

Yahweh Himself explains what His Name means in Exodus 3:14. Our English Bibles translate Yahweh there in a static way as, I AM THAT I AM. This is an unfortunate translation of what is a singular, genderless verb projecting into the future, and any

Hebrew Lexicon will verify that the accurate translation should read, "I WILL BE THAT WHICH I WILL BE."

The Septuagint (the Greek translation from Hebrew commenced in 250 BC by Hebrew scholars) translates God's Name as, "I AM THE ONE WHO IS BEING". The Existing One. In other words, Yahweh, the God of the Bible is the Living God, Who is eternal and uncaused. The New Testament puts it like this, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the LORD God, Who is and Who was and Who is to come" (Rev. 1:8).

God's Personal name is meant to be a real joy and comfort and strength to His people. It conveys that He is in covenant relationship with His redeemed people and will be whatever they may need at any time. No wonder we are called upon to love Him with all our hearts and with all our minds and with all our strength and to put no other idols or man-made gods before Him. We are to love "Him" --- not an impersonal essence or substance!

These revealed truths stand in stark contrast to the God Christendom worships today ... a Trinitarian God who has *no name*! Today Christianity worships the "Godhead" in Three Persons. God is no longer an Individual Self with a Name. Such a God is more than an Individual Self for He is three

Persons in 'One Essence'. How has this sleight of theological hand come about?

The story of the Big Switch starts as far back as when the Jews were carried by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, into exile in 586 BC. They knew they had offended Him big time. When they returned to their homeland they never again wanted to blaspheme the Name Yahweh, so they began a new practice of referring to Yahweh as "the Lord" (Hebrew *Adonai*). Yahweh is now "the Lord".

A personal name is now a title! It's important to again note that God Himself had not commanded this non-pronunciation of His Personal Name. Critically, this practice soon became embedded in what we know today as the Septuagint (you may have seen the Roman numerals LXX that are used as shorthand for this Greek translation). The Septuagint became a vital source for quoting the Old Testament when the apostles were writing the New Testament, because by now Greek was the common language of the Roman world, much like English is today. In fact, it's estimated that 75% of all Old Testament quotes in the New Testament are from the LXX and not from the Hebrew. Indeed, one NT book, Hebrews, contains 100% Septuagint Scripture quotes. So, wherever Yahweh's Name appeared in the original Hebrew, the Greek now gave Him the title, "the Lord" (some English

translations try to preserve where this switch has occurred by rendering Yahweh with all capital letters as 'LORD').

This is highly significant for our discussion. Let's not rush over it. When God's Name was translated into the Septuagint, it became a title and was no longer a personal name! Yahweh has now become 'the Lord'. So why is this a problem?

The answer is not far to find. Jews understood that whenever they read "The Lord" it was referring to the Individual God of Israel, Whose Name was Yahweh. The equivalence of Yahweh with "the Lord" was not hard for them. The Jews knew that the Greek title 'Lord' (*kyrios*) was generic and depending on context could refer to anybody with rank or authority other than Yahweh. However, in the Hebrew Bible the Jews had one word for 'the LORD' (*Adonai* and pronounced 'Adonay') and another word for any lesser lord, whether human or an angelic superior, (*adoni* and pronounced 'adonee'). But Greeks and Gentiles with no such Jewish background knowledge were very open to confusion since in their world there were "many gods and many lords" (to quote Paul's precise words to the Corinthians who came from that very surrounding culture, I Cor. 8: 5).

The big question therefore is this: When the apostles began confessing "Jesus is Lord" did they

mean Jesus was Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament (*Adonai*), or did they understand Jesus was Lord in the other sense (*adoni*)? When Peter, for example, preached the first 'Christian' sermon on the Day of Pentecost that, "God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified", was Peter suddenly being an ignorant Gentile and conflating the title "Lord" by applying it indiscriminately to two persons who are both God (Acts 2:36)? Is Jesus, the crucified but now glorified Messiah, Lord in the same sense as God is LORD? The answer frankly is not on your Biblical life!

We already know that the title "Lord" is a broad term that may refer to persons other than Yahweh. And you can be absolutely sure that on the Day of Pentecost when Peter said "*God has made Jesus the Lord Messiah*" the Jewish audience did not suddenly think, "We have a Second Member of the Godhead after all. Fancy that, all along there really were two Yahwehs." No way. They knew that Jesus was the Messianic Lord and not the LORD God Himself. They knew that when the Scriptures call somebody Lord it does not automatically mean they are "very God of very God", to borrow the words of one of the creeds.

In various passages the apostles use the formula, "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ".

Notice how God is not just the God of Christ but that He is “*the God of our Lord Jesus Christ*”. As the Lord Messiah, Jesus acknowledges God not only as his Father, but also as his God! The Lord Christ acknowledges One Who is his LORD God. Thus it is plainly evident that the title Lord Messiah is not to be conflated with the title for Lord God. Nowhere in Scripture is Jesus called ‘the Lord God’.

Nowhere! So, Jesus is not being identified *as* God but is being distinguished *from* God when the Scriptures call him “Lord Jesus Christ”. On this formula alone the Lord Jesus cannot be Yahweh God. Jesus is the LORD God’s Christ, or the Lord’s anointed. God is the LORD of our Lord Jesus.

There are *two* Lords in the Bible, but only one is Yahweh God and the Father of our Messianic Lord Jesus.

This does not mean that for us Jesus does not function as though he is God. Not at all. For in him “dwells all the fullness of the Deity bodily” and when we see Jesus we see God, when we hear Jesus we hear God (Col. 2:9; 2 Cor. 4: 6, etc.). To see Jesus and to hear Jesus is to see and to hear the Father as Jesus himself said. To obey Jesus is to obey God. To fail to hear Jesus is to fail to believe God. Absolutely. This is because Jesus perfectly represents and is perfectly authorised by God his Father to be His agent and to act fully on His behalf.

The New Testament does not attribute Jesus' miracles and mighty wonders and signs to his alleged Deity. Jesus himself testified that his words and his works were not his but God's through him. The apostles understood this clearly. Jesus of Nazareth was "a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you ..." (Acts 2:22). And, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy Spirit and with power; and he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). Yes, Jesus' miracles and signs were in a class of their own. No man ever spoke like this man and no man ever did what this man did. But all is attributed to the power and anointing of God his Father, not to the fact Jesus is God.

In the same way, nobody argues that because Moses or Elijah worked great miracles and signs they must therefore be Deity. When we read, "Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles" nobody argues the apostles must be God (Acts 2: 43). The source of Jesus' miracles and signs and wonders is attributed to the anointing of God upon him.

Back to the main point: Given that God's Name Yahweh does not appear in the NT texts, where

does it go in the pages of the NT? How do we identify Him now? The stubborn fact is that when we come to the NT the word “God” ---in Greek *ho theos* nearly always with the definite article --- is used to refer to the Father alone. Some 1325 times in the NT “God” is the Father. (Jesus is definitely called ‘god’ in two texts for sure and these must be looked at in their own contexts to once again see if the exception breaks the rule.) Here is a massive difference in NT use of ‘God’ from today’s Christian thinking where God is actually Three Persons. I repeat: In the NT 1325 times God is the Father ... *alone*.

Another striking fact is that Jesus himself confirmed the unitary monotheism of his Jewish heritage. Jesus endorsed the prophetic confession that his Father is “the one Who alone is God” (John 5:44) and his Father “is the only true God” (John 17:3). Throughout all of his recorded sayings and discourses Jesus only referred the word ‘God’ to his Father alone ... never to himself. Jesus knew there is only one Individual God Whose Name is Yahweh.

The apostles themselves agreed with Jesus’ unitary monotheistic belief. Paul for example says, “there is one God, the Father from Whom are all things and for Whom we exist” and then he goes on to say there is “one Lord Jesus the Messiah” through whom that one God the Father works to bless us (I

Cor. 8:6). Paul says, “There is one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all” (Eph. 4:6). Unless Jesus is the Father of all, according to Paul, Jesus is not God!

An easy and simple question we should ask ourselves is, how many Yahweh’s are there? The foundational bedrock of Israel’s confession is Deuteronomy 6:4. Jesus Himself believed this classical statement of Jewish monotheism. He called this “the first and the great commandment”. It reads, “Hear, O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD is one.” The capitalized LORD means the original Hebrew text reads, YHWH. Here is the Personal Name of God. Yahweh is “our God” and there is only one Yahweh who is LORD in this sense! This was the central creed or confession of Jesus’ own faith. Why is it not the central confession of the Church that claims to be following him today? How can we continue to ignore the first and greatest of all commandments? Worse still, how can we any longer continue to not listen to Jesus’ theology as to the identity of God?

Observe carefully. There are not two or three Yahwehs. Some Christian theologians insist that the word “one” in Deuteronomy 6:4 carries a “complex unity”. They reason, that just as one bunch of grapes does not mean you only have one grape but many, and just as one flock of birds does

not mean there is only one bird in the flock, why can't "one God" mean there can't be more than one Person in the "Godhead"?

Did you get the sleight of hand trick perpetrated on us here? For starters, the idea of there being a plurality of grapes in one bunch comes not from the numeral adjective 'one' but from the group-word 'bunch'. The truth is 'one bunch' of grapes is just that, 'one bunch', not two bunches, nor three bunches. And the idea of there being a plurality of birds in a flock does not come from the numeral adjective one, but from the plural word it modifies, flock. Any first grader in any school around the world knows that 'one' is not two, nor three, nor any other number. So, the idea of complexity or plurality does not come from the word 'one' but from the collective noun it modifies. If I showed you a centipede and said, "See how complex one is. One can mean one hundred because one centipede has a hundred legs!" you would immediately spot the ruse. If I said, "See, one really means three because that tripod has 3 legs!" again you would spot the trick.

Therefore ... and here is a devastating fact ... the numeral adjective "one" (the Hebrew word is *echad*) is not applied to the (alleged) 'group' word "God". In the Hebrew Bible God is YHWH. He is a Single Person with a Name. Even Trinitarians warn

us we must not confuse the Persons! If we take the English verse as it stands this fact becomes obvious. The English translation reads, "The LORD is our God, the LORD is one." Observe the adjective 'one' applies not to the word 'God' but to the word 'Lord'. There is only one Lord, not two or three Lords. This is the first principle of all Old Testament teaching about God. There is one Yahweh who is God.

So, where is Yahweh God in the New Testament? Has He suddenly dropped off the scene altogether? Or has He suddenly morphed into Three Persons in One Essence?

Most Christians today are unaware that Trinitarian doctrine has changed the meaning and content of God's Name. When Trinitarians speak of "God" they do not mean Yahweh God. For them, "God" consists of Three Persons who share one Being or one 'Substance'. This concept originated in pagan religions and not the Hebrew faith. The "orthodox" tri-partite God does not exist in the Scriptures, indeed their 'God' has no name at all! And the rare Christian who does equate Yahweh with God the Father, confesses that this "God the Father" is only one of Three Persons in the "Godhead". This is not Jesus' own confession of who God is.

We have some serious repenting to do. And by repenting I mean some serious re-thinking to do,

for to repent is to change one's mind. There is no shame in that. As if siding with Jesus and listening to his confession would bring shame anyway! In fact, it just may be for our blessing and glory. It is not by co-incidence that the Bible puts the doctrine of unitary monotheism often in the context of avoiding idolatry (Ex. 20: 1-5; I Cor. 8: 1-6; I John 5: 19-21, etc.). Yes, the God of the Bible is a single Individual "Self" who has a personal name. Jesus loved Him. And with my Lord Messiah Jesus I will love Him with God's help with all my heart and mind and strength. May we all!