

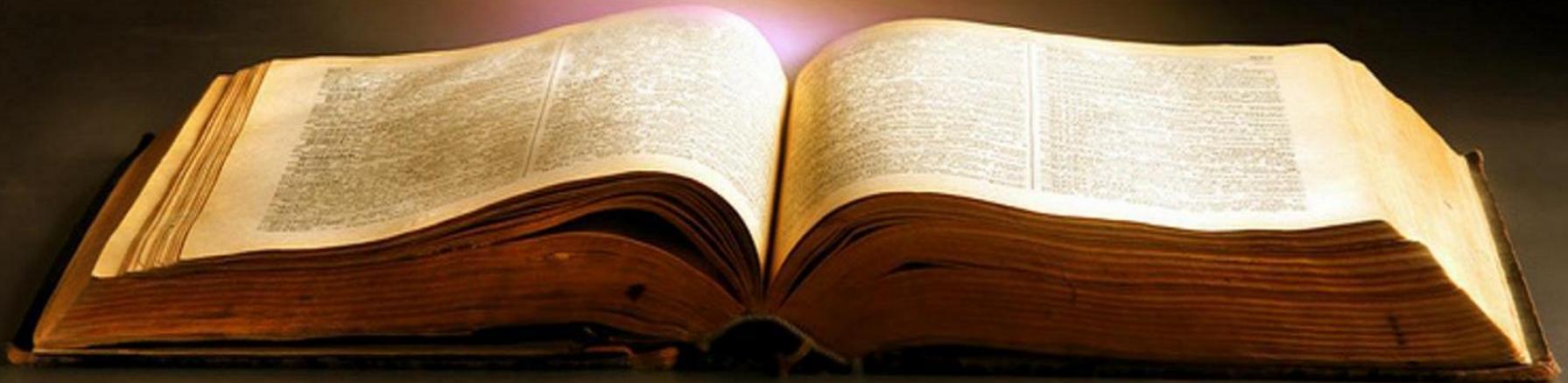
Stow Park Bible Fellowship

Bible Doctrines

Based on the teachings of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

6. The Names of God

and the Holy Trinity.



The Names of God and the Holy Trinity

- We have just been considering the Moral or Communicable attributes of God, and as we did this we reminded ourselves that we are not merely concerned with some intellectual or theoretical pursuit.
- All this is necessary in order that we may have communion with Him truly, in order that we may know God, in order that we may worship Him in spirit and in truth having communion with Him, and be blessed by Him.
- We desire to **know** God – yes, but not merely that we may have knowledge, it is also that we may come into conformity with Him and *with His plan for our lives!*
- We must also remind ourselves that in order to know God, we are entirely dependent upon God's revelation of Himself, even if we recognise that we will only fully understand some of His revelation.

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- To help us in this understanding, God has applied special names to Himself, and so we come to the great subject of His names.
- Now let me say right away that the purpose of these names is again to focus our attention upon some aspect of the being of God - the character of God.
- So we regard these names of God as defining the attributes of God still more specifically for by understanding these names we can better grasp and apprehend more of God's character
- So, the first of these names is **EL**. This means being first and supreme carrying the idea that God is someone of strength and power – mightiness if you like.
- Then the next name is **ELOHIM** which is *plural* in form, again carrying the idea that God is someone who is to be feared as well as someone who is powerful. This name is usually used when God is speaking of Himself in terms of creation

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- You won't find this name in modern Bibles. but it's used c.2,500 times in the Hebrew Bible when God describes himself in creation.
 - Modern translation simply say 'God' as in Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning *God* created the heaven and the earth." 'God' in the Hebrew Bible is shown as '*Elohim*'.
 - The next name is **ELYON** which means the high and exalted One.
 - You see each of these names tells us something in particular about God and as it is used in the narrative of the Bible, it is meant to convey a particular impression regarding God's person and personality.
 - Then there is the great name **ADONAI**, meaning the Almighty Lord, the ruler to whom everything is subject and to whom people are related as servants. Frequently used by God when addressing the children of Israel.
- EL**, supreme, **ELOHIM**, powerful, **ELYON**, exalted, **ADONI**, Almighty.

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- But God has also given Himself certain other types of names which are designed to show the relationship of that exalted, eternal, almighty Being to His creatures.
- For example **SHADDAI** which describes God as possessing all power in heaven and in earth, but especially God is subjecting all these and making them subservient to the work of His grace.
- But perhaps the best known and the one which the Bible tells us is the most important for us, is the great name **YAHWEH** which we translate as *Jehovah*.
- It means *I am that I am*, which we could translate as *I shall be what I shall be*. It therefore describes the unchangeableness in His relationship to His people. Perhaps, *I am who I am; I shall be whom I shall be – who nevertheless does reveal Himself to His people*. The great covenant name of God. Covenants are promises, agreements God makes with us.

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- Yahweh (Jehovah - unchanging). What a wonderful name this is for it indicates that this Almighty Being, whom we worship, who is self-existent in Himself, nevertheless chooses to reveal and manifestly binds Himself to mere creatures of time like ourselves; to those whom He has brought into being.
- Also in the Scriptures we find that certain qualifying terms are added to the great name of Jehovah. **JEHOVAH SABAOTH** which we translate as 'the Lord of hosts'. The *unchanging*, Almighty One who is the Lord of Angelic Hosts.
- Again **JEHOVAH JIREH** the name which God gave to Abraham – the *unchanging* Lord will provide.
- And **JEHOVAH ROPHEH** the NAME God gave to Moses – the *unchanging* Lord that heals.
- Or **JEHOVAH NISSI** the *unchanging* Lord, my banner, under which the Israelites would conquer.

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- Then **JEHOVAH SHALOM** the name by which God revealed himself to Gideon – the *unchanging* Lord sends peace.
- The very beautiful name in Psalm 23, the *unchanging* Lord is my Shepherd, **JEHOVAH RO'EH**.
- **JEHOVAH TSIDKENU** the *unchanging* Lord our Righteousness.
- **JEHOVAH SHAMMAH** the *unchanging* Lord is present
- So you see that every one of these names carries with it a very great and wonderful meaning, full of comfort and consolation. And the purpose, in a sense, of knowing these Scriptures and expounding them is that these names of God, and their meanings and significance, should be brought home to us.
- As recorded by John in his gospel, 17:6, when Jesus was praying for His disciples, He prays, “I have revealed to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to me.

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- He had been revealing God in all these characteristics, says Dr. Lloyd-Jones. Teaching his followers how to think of God, and how to KNOW Him.
- He had shown them that God must not be thought of as some vague Energy, rather that God is personal and as a person He acts and reveals Himself.
- It is through the names that God gives to Himself that He tells us this wonderful truth about Himself. And it is as we come to know God in terms of these names that we will find peace and comfort and joy in believing.
- Finally on the subject of names, God has revealed Himself in the person of His Son, the greatest name of all, the Lord Himself.
- He is **EMMANUEL** – God with us, the mighty ruler, the eternal God who has come down among us and into time.

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- Now all this leads into perhaps the greatest, the most vital and most important aspect of this exalted doctrine of God –
- **THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY**
- Even in considering the names of God and His various attributes, we have been preparing ourselves for this great doctrine and no one can read the Bible without, of necessity, coming face to face with this Doctrine of the Trinity.
- As we have said repeatedly during these discussions that this doctrine undoubtedly is the one that is more than most – mysterious, and quite the most difficult to comprehend.
- No human being would have thought of this doctrine. It comes directly from the Bible and from nowhere else at all. Men and women have thought of God; they have their gods; but no one has ever thought of the Trinity.

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- Yes, mysterious, but also, the most distinctive doctrine of the Christian faith!
- How many sermons have you ever heard on the doctrine of the Trinity? Very few I would suggest, and Why? Because of its difficulty and mystery. But that is no excuse for every doctrine that we find in the Bible we must regard as from God and there is none more important than this.
- So how do we approach this doctrine?
- Not by philosophy, the Trinity cannot be explained through that.
- What is Philosophy – put simply, it is a way of thinking, using our minds to consider the world, the universe, and society. It works by asking very basic questions about the nature of human thought, the nature of the universe, and the connections between them. Philosophy is often general and abstract.

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- No, we cannot hope to grasp the doctrine of the Trinity with our minds as it is entirely beyond us and above us.
- We are simply meant to look at it with wonder, with awe and with worship, and be **amazed at it**.
- Does that disappoint you or surprise you?
- Well I'm sorry but I don't believe there is a formula that will fully explain it to our minds.
- Now let's again be clear: *Nowhere in the Bible will you find a statement that God is three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit*, but by implication the doctrine of the Trinity, as we shall come to see, is to be found in the Old Testament and in the New. It is *suggested* everywhere and in the most unlikely and unexpected places. It is *implied*.
- But before we look at the evidence we must lay down some points.

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- This doctrine does not mean that there are three Gods. This is called *Tritheism*. The Unitarians say that Christians are *Tritheists* because we believe in three Gods.
- We must reject this completely. Throughout the Old Testament it is emphasised that there is only *one* true and living God. We read, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord' and that message is repeated constantly to the children of Israel.
- Remember they were surrounded by nations who believed in a variety of gods and the children of Israel were called upon to proclaim the unity of God and the fact that there is only one God.
- God in His innermost nature is one. Nevertheless He exists as three Persons. Now we are already in trouble, are we not? Do we not want to ask, 'Are these three Persons different in essence and If so, then surely there must be three Gods?'

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- The trouble is due to the inadequacy of language, says Dr. Lloyd-Jones. We have to talk about ‘persons’, because we cannot think of a higher category than ‘persons’, and as we think of persons we think of individuals, and we are separating them.
- But as the Bible uses these expressions, they obviously mean something different. Even Lloyd-Jones says he doesn’t pretend to understand – nobody does. The greatest minds in the Church throughout the centuries have been grappling with this and trying to explain it, and they cannot understand it. So they can do nothing beyond what we are doing now. They say that God is one, but nevertheless that God, who is one, in His ultimate innermost nature exists in three persons
- Here is what the Westminster Confession of Faith says, “There are three Persons within the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.”

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- Now here's something to think about: the 1st chapter of John states, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' It seems to be contradictory, but it is true. The Word (Jesus) is God as the Father is God and yet there are not two Gods – there is only one Godhead. Again we are reminded that Jesus said, 'I and my Father are One'.
- Paul also states in Romans 9:5, 'Christ . . . who is over all, God blessed for ever.'
- Also Paul writes in Colossians 2:9, 'For in Him (Jesus) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.'
- And in Titus 2:13 we are told to look for 'that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ'.
- Jesus Christ is God. Not only is the Father God but the Son is God. There are explicit statements of that.

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- But not only that; you cannot read the Gospels without finding that the attributes we have discovered of God are also ascribed to Jesus – His eternity, for instance: ‘Before Adam was, I am.’ (John 8:58). Jesus does not hesitate to say it.
- Then there is His holiness; also His life. Our Lord says, ‘For as the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself (John 5:26)
- Jesus also says: ‘As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to all those You have given Him. (John 17:2). That is only true of God.
- Then there is His immutability: ‘Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and for ever (Hebrews 13:8).
- Next His omnipotence. ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’. Nothing is impossible to Jesus

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- Then His omnipresence, ‘Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world .(Mat 28:20)
- His Omniscience: Jesus knew everything, nothing was hidden from Him – remember the woman of Samaria and how Jesus knew of her husbands.
- So we see many of the attributes we have found belonging to God also belong to Jesus, So we can say with certainty that the Father is God and can also say the Son is God.
- Yes, but we also must say that the Holy Spirit is God.
- Do you remember when we studied Acts, Peter’s terrible words to Ananias and Sapphira? He said, Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit . . . you have not lied to men but to God’. (Acts 5:3,4)
- Also in Mat.28:19: ‘Baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

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- Then, the Apostolic blessing: ‘The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.’
- So you see the Bible asserts that the Holy Spirit, in the same way as the Father and the Son, is also God. And there are many other examples.
- There are some people who say that there is just one God who can reveal Himself in different ways, sometimes as the Father, others as the Son and again as the Spirit, the same as a human man can be revealed as a Husband, a Father, and a Taxi Driver.
- But the Bible rejects all that. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not merely modes in which God appears. No, there are three Persons in the Godhead. The Persons refer to each other; Christ spoke about the others and referred to the others, not meaning Himself but the other Persons in the Holy Trinity.

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- Then, remember when the announcement was made to Mary about the birth of her Son, the three Persons were mentioned: the power of God, the power of the Spirit and the power of the Son who would be born. (Luke 1:26-38).
- Even in the Old Testament there is much teaching about the Holy Spirit and about the Son. Now you would not expect to find the doctrine of the Trinity expounded as clearly in the Old Testament as in the New, for the reason of Polyism – the belief of many gods by the children of Israel’s neighbouring countries,
- But, for example in the very first chapter of Genesis , you will remember you will find the doctrine of the Trinity quite plainly, if you look for it. Take that name of God – *Elohim*. It is a plural term. God is speaking of Himself in the plural, then in Genesis 1:26 we read ‘Let *us* make man in *our* image. Why is that? Because of the blessed Trinity.

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- What is the relationship between these three Persons, we might ask?
- The answer in the Scriptures everywhere is that they are co-eternal; there is no subordination as such. When the Son is called the Son, it does not mean that He is subordinate or any less than His Father
- The fact that He is the Son means that He is equal to the Father. 'The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being'. (Heb.1:3) – not subordinated to Him or different from Him. He is the same as and equal to the Father of whom He is the Son.
- Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones sums it up in this way: The Trinity has existed in the Godhead from all eternity. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; and yet there are not three Gods but one God.

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- In reality we cannot go further than that. The Scriptural truth, the Christian truth, insists upon our saying that there are three Persons, and yet we must not say that there are three Gods. This is a great and eternal mystery.
- The Father creates and elects and planned salvation for us. The Son was sent by the Father to work out this salvation and the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father and the Son to apply salvation.
- Now that is a staggering thought which we should not try to understand with our minds.
- As little children we must receive the truth as it is revealed and to worship the Godhead, three in One in love, adoration and amazement.