

49. Q. What do we mean when we say that God is longsuffering?
50. Q. What lessons should we learn from these great truths about God?

Lesson Six

THE NAME OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Exodus 3:1-15.

Scripture To Memorize: "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Exo. 3:14).

51. Q. What is the Hebrew term for the Deity in the first verse of Genesis?
- A. The term Elohim.
52. Q. What is the signification of this term?
- A. It is used to designate "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" (Isa. 57:15).

(1) This term is translated "God" in our Versions. "In our religion we do not speak of 'a God,' but of 'God'—a single and definite being: there is none like Him" (Clarke, Outline of Christian Theology). (2) This term is obviously used to designate God as the Absolute, the Omnipotent, the Eternal One. Hence it is the designation generally used in those scriptures in which God is depicted in His works of Omnipotence; as, for instance, in the first chapter of Genesis, in which He is revealed as the Creator. Gen. 1:1—"In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth." (3) This term is also plural, which is most significant. It evidently alludes to "a certain plurality in the divine nature." Gen. 1:26—"And Elohim said, let us make man in our image," etc. "The Holy Spirit who presided over the development of revelation may well have directed the use of the plural in general, and even the adoption of the plural name Elohim in particular, with a view to the future unfolding of truth with regard to the Trinity" (Strong, Systematic Theology, p. 319).

53. Q. By what designation did God reveal Himself to Abram?

A. By the designation, God Almighty.

(1) Gen. 17:1—"Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said unto him, I am God Almighty," etc. (in Hebrew, El Shad-dai). (2) This designation was handed down to Isaac and Jacob. See Gen. 28:3 and 35:11.

54. Q. By what Name did God reveal Himself to Moses and the Hebrew people?

A. By the Name, I AM.

Exo. 3:14—"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

55. Q. How is this Name rendered in our language?

A. As Jehovah.

Exo. 6:2, 3—"And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am Jehovah; and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah I was not known to them."

56. Q. What is the signification of this Name?

A. It is used in those scriptures which reveal the Deity as the personal God, the covenant God, the benevolent God, the God of revelation, the Deliverer and Benefactor and Friend of His people.

(1) The true pronunciation of this Name, known only to the early leaders of Israel, is lost. The Jews have long regarded it "the great and incommunicable Name," and have from remotest times avoided even the mention of it. See Levit. 24:16. To even speak this name is regarded as blasphemy by all orthodox Jews. According to tradition, the Name was pronounced only once each year, by the High Priest when he went into the Holy of Holies on each Annual Day of Atonement. No wonder, then, that the Jews charged Jesus with blasphemy when He assumed this Name for Himself. John 8:58—"Before Abraham was born, I am." Cf. v. 59—"They took up stones therefore to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple." Jesus must have had the right to assume this Name for Him-

self, else He would be the most blasphemous imposter who ever appeared in the world. (2) This Name is rendered Ehyeh by some authorities; and by others, Yahweh. In our version, it is transliterated into Jehovah. It is commonly rendered Lord in the Authorized Version; but is allowed to stand as Jehovah in the Revised Version. (3) When the Deity is presented in scripture as combining works of omnipotence with those of benevolence, the combined form is used—Jehovah Elohim. This is rendered Lord God in the Authorized Version, and Jehovah God, in the Revised Version. E. G., Gen. 2:7—“and Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground,” etc.

57. Q. What is indicated by this great and incommunicable Name?

A. It signifies especially (1) timelessness, (2) personality, and (3) presence.

(1) By timelessness, we mean eternity or self-existence. Take, for illustration, a problem in mathematics, such as dividing 1000 by 3. You could keep on dividing forever, and there would always be a fraction remaining. So if you could project your mind back into the past, and back and back and back for ever, God was always, at any time, The I AM. Or, you could project your mind into the future, on and on and on for ever, and God would always be The I AM. If you were asked, “Where did God come from?” reason would require that you answer: God never came, God has always been. If God had a beginning, He would not be God, because finite beings only, have a beginning. I cannot fully understand this, any more than I can comprehend the limitlessness of space, but it is entirely logical. God, being Infinity, has the ground of His existence in Himself; and is therefore without beginning and without end. Thus the Name itself signifies timelessness, eternity, self-existence. (2) By personality, we mean self-consciousness and self-determination. Only a person can say, “I am.” “I think, therefore I am” (Descartes). “Thinking is self-conscious being” (Ladd, Philosophy of Knowledge, p. 59). It is this faculty of self-consciousness, or realization of selfhood, that distinguishes a person from brutes and things. If a pig could say, understandingly, “I am a pig,” it would

no longer be a pig, but would be a person. I AM signifies personality (understanding, feeling, free will, etc.). God is not the everlasting I WAS, but the everlasting I AM. (3) This Name also signifies presence. God is always The I AM. Not the I WAS—but the I AM. Psa. 139:7-10, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" etc. An atheist once wrote on a piece of paper, "God is nowhere." His little daughter changed it to read: "God is now here;" and the atheist was converted. (4) "Observe that personality needs to be accompanied by life—the power of self-consciousness and self-determination needs to be accompanied by activity—in order to make up our total idea of God as Spirit" (Strong, Systematic Theology, p. 253). To summarize: The Name by which God has revealed Himself to us shows that He is not a thing; not nature as a whole; not an impersonal principle, energy or influence; but a personal God, a living God, an ever-present God. John 4:24—"God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

58. Q. What other significance has this Name for us?

A. It shows that God is not just a human idea or concept, as some would claim.

This name is of such infinite signification that it utterly destroys the notion that Jehovah was an imaginary tribal deity of the Hebrews, like "Baal" of the Moabites, "Ash-taroth" of the Sidonians, "Dagon" of the Philistines, etc. Such a Name as this could never have been humanly imagined—it must have been revealed.

59. Q. What great lesson should we derive from these truths?

A. We should learn to revere, adore and honor the great and holy Name of our God.

Call attention to the evils of blasphemy. Swearing is a senseless and profitless habit; therefore a most inexcusable sin. Exo. 20:7—"Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain." Matt. 5:34, the words of Jesus, "I say unto you, Swear not at all," etc.

60. Q. What is the favorite term for the Deity in our New Testament Scriptures?

A. The term Father in Heaven, or Heavenly Father.

(1) This is the term used so frequently by Jesus Himself. Matt. 6:9—"Our Father who art in heaven," etc. Matt. 6:14—"your heavenly Father." John 17:11—"Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me."
 (2) In the apostolic writings, the Deity is often spoken of as "God the Father," as "God and Father of all," and as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 2:11, Eph. 4:6, Eph. 1:3, etc.). (3) These New Testament terms all signify relationship—a spiritual relationship to be enjoyed through Jesus Christ. "Through Christ, who has merited adoption and filiation for His people, every believer has a right to call God Father" (Cruden, Concordance, in loco). Cf. Rom. 8:15-16. (4) It will thus be seen that God has revealed Himself progressively: first, as Elohim, the Omnipotent and Eternal One, the Creator of all things: later, as Jehovah, the Benefactor, Redeemer and Friend of His people; and finally, as Heavenly Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the spiritual Father of all true believers. And so we are taught to pray: "Our Father who art in heaven," etc. (Matt. 6:9).

REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON SIX

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52. Q. What is the signification of this term?
53. Q. By what designation did God reveal Himself to Abram?
54. Q. By what Name did God reveal Himself to Moses and the Hebrew people?
55. Q. How is this Name rendered in our language?
56. Q. What is the signification of this Name?
57. Q. What is indicated by this great and incommunicable Name?
58. Q. What other significance has this Name for us?
59. Q. What great lesson should we derive from these truths?
60. Q. What is the favorite term for the Deity in our New Testament Scriptures?