



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 2.4 – The Doctrine of God

Names and Descriptions of God

In the Bible, God described Himself with such concepts as life, light, love, and truth. **“We are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life”** (1 John 5:20). **“God is love”** (1 John 4:8). **“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all”** (1 John 1:5). **“For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself”** (John 5:26).

We cannot know God fully, of course. But God does describe Himself in terms of things we know, so that we can at least get some idea of what He is like. **“He...is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen”** (1 Timothy 6:15-16). **“God is Spirit”** (John 4:24). **“God is exalted by His power...God is great...With God is awesome majesty...He is excellent in power, in judgment and abundant justice”** (Job 36:22, 26; 37:22-23).

God has given Himself the name **JHVH** (Jehovah or Jahveh), translated in most English Bibles as **“LORD”**. This name is related to the verb “to be” as indicated by His words to Moses: **“I AM WHO I AM...Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’”** (Exodus 3:14). This name indicates the constancy, the faithfulness, and the dependability of God. He makes promises and keeps them. He can fulfill His promises because He is supreme and dependent on no one else.

The Bible calls God **EL** or **ELOHIM**, which is the plural of El. This is a more generic name for God. El and Elohim are generally translated as **“God”**. The word seems to emphasize His majesty and power, since it is used in Genesis 1: **“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”** (Genesis 1:1). **“Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; nor is there any who can deliver from My hand”** (Deuteronomy 32:39).

Another name for God is **ADONAI**, which is translated as Lord (without the capital letters). This word describes God as a master or boss. Abraham once used this term when he prayed to God: **“I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord”** (Genesis 18:27).

Sometimes the word El is used together with other words. Perhaps the most well-known is **EL SHADDAI**, which is translated as **“God Almighty”**.

Here are some examples of other names for God:

- **And Joshua said, ‘By this you shall know that the living God is among you’.** (Joshua 3:10)
- **I ... will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.** (Psalms 7:17)
- **He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.** (Psalm 91:1)
- **But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King.** (Jeremiah 10:10)
- **the God of gods** (Daniel 11:36)

Questions

1. Which concepts are associated with God in the Bible?
2. Why can it be said that we know God, and yet we do not know Him?
3. What is the meaning of the name JHVH?
4. What other names are used for God in the Bible?
5. What is the most common name for God in the language you know best?
6. If there are other names for God in this language, name them.
7. Which name for God do you use when you pray to Him?