Systematic Theology Series
Theology Proper: The Study of God the Father

Wednesday Night Teaching Schedule			
Date	**Lesson**	**Teacher**	**Topics**
10-7	1	Matt	Introduction to Theology Proper: Why Theology Matters and What is Needed in the Study of Theology Proper
10-14	2	Matt	The Existence of God and The Trinity: God is 3 in 1
10-21	3	Matt	The Essence, Attributes and Sovereignty of God
10-28	4	Tom	The Aseity, Immutability and Eternality of God
11-4	5	Matt	The Immensity/Omnipresence, Omniscience and Names of God
11-11	6	Ben	The Wrath, Jealousy and Patience of God
11-18	7	Rob	The Holiness, Faithfulness and Glory of God
12-2	8	Ben	The Love, Goodness and Wisdom of God
12-9	9	Matt	The Grace, Mercy and Will of God

A.W. Tozer in his classical book on theology proper entitled The Knowledge of the Holy said, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." Sadly, our fallen world is plagued with a man centered view of God, and the modern church has become deeply infected by this so that what often comes into the mind of many so called believers is not what Scripture teaches regarding the person and work of God the Father. Therefore, we will spend this fall semester on Wednesday nights studying the person and attributes of God. Here at Belcroft Bible we unashamedly have and minister with a high view of God because that is what the Bible declares about God and that is what He demands of us. Thus, as we begin this semester in an ongoing study in systematic theology we will grow deeper in understanding of God that He alone has Ultimate Authority, that He works in Undeniable Sovereignty, that He lives in Unapproachable Holiness, that He is marked by Unquestionable Mercy, that He will bring Undisputable Wrath, that He offers Unfathomable Grace, that His character, plans and promises are all covered in Unending Faithfulness and that all the earth was created to give Him Unequivocal Worship. May the quote below further provoke your thoughts on why this study in Theology Proper matters in our day.

"The god of this century no more resembles the Sovereign of Holy Writ than does the dim flickering of a candle the glory of the midday sun. The god who is talked about in the average pulpit, spoken of in the ordinary Sunday school, mentioned in much of the religious literature of the day, and preached in most of the so-called Bible conferences, is a figment of human imagination, an invention of maudlin sentimentality. The heathen outside the pale of Christendom form gods of wood and stone, while millions of heathen inside Christendom manufacture a god out of their carnal minds." – A.W. Pink

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Review:[1]

1. **The Aseity of God:** The first unique attribute that should be considered is the independence of God. Historically this attribute has been referred to as the aseity of God. The word “aseity” comes from the Latin a "from" and se "self". It refers to the fact that God is from himself and nothing else. To put it another way, God does not depend upon anyone or anything. Nothing caused God to exist, and nothing sustains his existence. *Aseity is* the independence of God being that perfection of God according to which He is the eternal foundational Being, and, consequently, is the absolute Being, not dependent on anything outside Himself, self-sufficient in every respect. Simplified: God's perfect self-sufficiency as the eternal foundational Being. God has no origin. He is not even self-originating since He had no origin. The answer to the question, “Where did God come from?” is nowhere, for He always has been. The answer to the question, “Who made God?” is no one for God was not made.

2. **The Immutability of God:** The immutability of God is that perfection of God according to which He is unchanging and unchangeable in His being/perfections, purposes, and promises. Immutability does not mean inactivity or immobility, nor does it prevent or exclude distinct activities or emotions with time. The mystery of Divine immutability is that though He is immutable, He creates mutable beings all toward whom He relates with in time. God does not change in his perfections, his purpose, or his promises. This does not mean that God does not change how he responds to men. For instance, God is unchangeably holy. If I rebel against Him his holiness demands that I be punished. However, if I repent and turn to Christ Jesus the Bible says that God will forgive me. Has God’s character changed? No! The way he acts toward me, however, has changed but even that “change” towards me was exactly what he promised he would do in His Word. That is God’s unchanging policy of handling man’s changing ways. So in order to remain unchanging in His essence and eternal purposes, God changes in how He deals with individual people and groups.

3. **The Eternality of God:** The eternity of God is that perfection of God according to which He transcends all limitation of time. It is “that perfection of God whereby He is elevated above all temporal limits and all succession of moments, and possesses the whole of His existence in one indivisible present.” (Berkhof, p. 60) God is without beginning, without ending, and without succession of moments in His experience of His being and His consciousness of all reality. God is infinite with regard to time. God has neither a beginning nor an end; He has always existed. He is not bound or changed by time, but He has chosen to work through men in time for His glory. Eternality does not simply mean that God has been around longer than we have. There is a qualitative difference. God completely transcends the time by which we are bound.

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[1] Grateful for Pastor Tom Leake and GAMA Bible Institute notes that I have used in different ways throughout this study. I used to teach the *Theology Proper* class at the GAMA institute and Tom’s notes were used in that class and used by permission in making these notes as well. Also, I am grateful for my seminary notes from Dr. Mook and his class on *Theology Proper* that have been used by permission in helping create these notes for this series. Also portions of The Shepherds Training Institute (TSI) notes on *Theology Proper* taught by Dr Paul Shirley will used at times in this class.

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I. The Immensity & Omnipresence of God

A. Meaning:

- The immensity and the omnipresence of God are those perfections of God according to which He transcends all limitation of space, "and yet is present with every point of space with His whole Being." (Berkhof, p. 60)

- "transcends" = is greater than and independent of the creation (material and spiritual)

- Simplified: God's perfect presence with Himself, transcendence of all limitation of space, and yet presence with "every point of space with His whole Being" (Berkhof, 60).

    1. Immensity stresses God's transcendence of space.
    2. Omnipresence stresses God's immanence with space.

- The term omnipresent means God is all present, that is, God is present everywhere in the universe and beyond the universe at all times. God transcends all space but is also present at every location in space. He is everywhere present simultaneously.

- Moody Handbook, p. 194, "A distinction should be recognized between the immensity of God and the omnipresence of God. Immensity emphasizes the transcendence of God and stresses that He is **not bound** by space, whereas omnipresence emphasizes His immanence, **filling all space**, including earth.

- Omnipresence points to how God is infinite with regard to space. The prefix "omni" comes from the Latin for all. Thus, God's omnipresence refers to His presences everywhere. Everything is totally exposed before God. There is no corner in which God cannot be found.

- Berkhof, p. 60, "The infinity of God may also be viewed with reference to space, and is then called His immensity. It may be defined as that perfection of the Divine Being by which He transcends all spatial limitations, and yet is present in every point of space with His whole Being. It has a negative and a positive side, denying all limitations of space to the Divine Being, and asserting that God is above space and fills every part of it with His whole Being. The last words are added, in order to ward off the idea that God is diffused through space, so that one part of His being is present in one place, and another part in some other places."

B. Scriptural Proof:

- He is the creator and possessor of all things: Gen 14:19, 22; Deut 10:14.

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- Heaven and earth cannot contain Him: 1 Kgs 8:27; 2 Chr 2:6; Isa 66:1; Acts 7:48.

- He fills heaven and earth, so nothing is hid from His presence, and He is both close and far off: Jer 23:23, 24; Ps 139:7-10; Acts 17:27, 28.

- He manifests Himself variously in various places.

  (1) He dwells and has His throne in heaven: Deut 26:15; 2 Sam 22:7; 1 Kgs 8:32; Ps 11:4; 33:13; 115:3, 16; Isa 63:15; Matt 5:34; 6:9; John 14:2; Eph 1:20; Heb 1:3; Rev 1:4ff.

  (2) He descends from heaven: Gen 3:8; 11:5,7; 12; 15; 18; 19; Exod 3:8; 19:9, 11, 18, 20; Deut 33:2; Judg 5:4.

  (3) He dwells in the midst His people: Exod 19:6; 25:8.

    (a) in Canaan: Judg 11:24; 1 Sam 26:19.

    (b) in Jerusalem: Exod 20:24; Deut 12:11.

    (c) in the Tabernacle and the Temple: Exod 40:34, 35; 1 Kgs 8:10-11.

    (d) above the Ark between the cherubim: 1 Sam 4;4; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kgs 19:15.

  (4) He is far from the wicked: Ps 11:5; 35:10ff; 50:15ff; 145:20. (relational distance)

  (5) He is close to the righteous: Ps 11:7; Isa 57:15; Ps 51:19. (relational closeness)

  (6) Christ is the fullness of the Godhead bodily: Col 2:9.

  (7) He indwells the Church: John 14:23; Rom 8:9, 11; 1 Cor 3:16 [corporate]; 6:19 [individual]; Eph 2:21; 3:17.

- Beyond all the verses which directly tell us God is everywhere are all the acts of God which assume His omnipresence, i.e. simultaneously hearing all prayers throughout the world, ministering in all churches at once, saving people across the globe.

- As **Colossians 1:17** says, He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

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- Similarly, **Psalm 139:7-10** refers to God's omnipresence in this way Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

- God is not localized. He has access to all His creation at all times. There is no place in which he cannot be worshiped, nor a place in which our sin will be hidden from Him.

C. Clarifications and Implications:

- Two distinctions must be made to accurately understand the omnipresence of God. **First,** God's omnipresence is an outworking of His infinitude not a part of His eternal essence. God existed infinitely even before space and matter were created. God could destroy all space and His Divine essence would not cease to exist.

- This is very different from the teachings of pantheistic philosophy. The Bible teaches that God is everywhere. Pantheism teaches that God is everything, or at least in everything. Thus, if you take everything away you no longer have the essence of God. This, of course, contradicts biblical doctrines of creation, aseity, eternality, immutability, and many other biblical truths.

- A **second** distinction must be made when discussing God's omnipresence. God is everywhere at the same time, but He is not everywhere at the same time in the same way. For instance, God is in Heaven in a much different way than He is in Hell. Contrary to popular sentiment, God is in Hell. He is there through His wrath, which is the polar opposite of how He is in Heaven.

- Everywhere there is a there God is there. This omnipresence should be both a comfort and a warning to mankind. It is a comfort because God is always present to sustain His people. It is a warning because our King and Judge sees all of our actions ***(James 5:4, Acts 5:1-10)***. Apart from Christ this would be an unbearable thought!

- Moody Handbook, p. 194, "The doctrine of omnipresence is a comfort to the believer who recognizes that no calamity can befall him that God is not present with Him; it is also a warning to the disobedient person that he cannot escape the presence of God."

Group Exercise: Look up Rev 14:10-11 and explain whether or not God's presence is in Hell and in what way is that different from His presence in Heaven.

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II. The Omniscience of God

A. The Meaning

1. The omniscience of God is that perfection of God according to which He "in one eternal and most simple act" knows Himself, all actual things outside Himself, and all things that do not become actual in time and space. (Berkhof, p. 66)

2. Simplified: God's perfect knowledge of Himself, all actual things outside Himself, and all things that do not become reality, in one eternal and simple (not having any parts [but having distinctions] in its essence) act (exertion of energy).

3. EDOT "God knows all inward thoughts and outward acts of humanity. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the one to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:13)."

4. God is infinite with regard to knowledge. To say that God is omniscient means that everything is fully known by God at all times. There is nothing knowable that he doesn't know, and his knowledges is immediate and innate. In this sense God is an "uneducated" God because he did not need to learn anything. His knowing is not the result of observation, learning, or reasoning. He simply knows it because it "is."

5. God's infinitude with regard to knowledge means that God perfectly knows Himself (**Mt 11:27**), His creation, and even all possibilities. On this point, we must acknowledge that God's knowledge extends to every possibility or else we cannot say that God has chosen the best possible means of glorifying himself in history.

6. On this point of "possibilities" Dr Mook says, "I do not say that God knows things that are "possible," because in God's eternal mind and plan, there are only actual things, not possible things. **He does know** what would have occurred if circumstances had been different, but since in His mind and plan they never would occur, they are not "possibilities."

7. Wayne Grudem says (p. 190), "God's knowledge may be defined as follows: God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act. … the quality of knowing everything is called omniscience, and because God knows everything, he is said to be omniscient… God knows all things actual. This means all things that exist and all things that happen…. He knows the tiny details of every one of our lives, for Jesus tells us, "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him," (Matthew 6:8), and, "Even the hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:30)…. Got also knows all things possible…. The fact that God knows all things possible can also be deduced from God's full knowledge of himself. If God fully knows himself, he knows everything he is able to do, which includes all things are possible. This fact is indeed amazing. God has

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made an incredibly complex and varied universe. But there are thousands upon thousands of other variations or kinds of things that God could have created but did not…. Our definition of God's knowledge speaks of God knowing everything in one simple act. Here again the word simple is used in the sense not divided into parts. This means that God is always fully aware of everything. If he should wish to tell us the number of grains of sand on the seashore or the number of stars in the sky, he would not have to count them all quickly like some kind of giant computer, nor would he have to call the number to mind because it was something he had not thought about for a time. Rather, he always knows all things at once…. Every bit of knowledge is always fully present in his consciousness; it never grows dim or fades into his non-conscious memory….

B. Scriptural Proof.

1. Scripture always presupposes God's conscious knowledge.

2. Some Key Scriptural passages on God's omniscience: 1 Chronicles 16:9; Job 26:6; 28:24; Psalms 33:13-15; 139:1-6, 15; Proverbs 5:21; 15:3 ; Matthew 6:8;Acts 1:24; Romans 11:33; Hebrews 4:13; 1 John 3:20

3. God is light (1 John 1:5), and is the source of light (Ps 27:1; 36:9; 43:3; John 1:4, 9; 8:12; Jas 1:17 – "Father of lights"). NOTE: Though light in Scripture symbolizes holiness, purity, joy, and the state of the believer (Ps 27:1; 36:9; 97:11; Isa 60:19; John 1:4; Eph 5:8), yet, because the basic function of light is to reveal what is hidden due to darkness (Eph 5:13), the moral symbolism of light is derived from its intellectual effect (intellect is an aspect of the heart in the Bible).

4. God's light shines on the believer through the knowledge of His glory given through Jesus Christ. In this sense the believer walks in the light. (John 1:5; 3:19, 21; 9:5; 12:35; 2 Cor 4:4-6; Rom 13:12; Eph 5:8; Phil 2:15; 1 Thess 5:5; 1 John 1:7)

5. The Objects/Extent of God's Knowledge.

    a) Himself as Triune (Matt 11:27; John 1:18; 10:15; 1 Cor 2:10).
    b) All things (2 Chr 16:9; Isa 40:13; Heb 4:13; Rom 11:34; 1 John 3:20).
    c) All needs (Matt 6:8, 32).
    d) Even the smallest physical things (Matt 10:30).
    e) The heart of man (Jer 11:20; 17:9, 10; 20:12; Ps 7:9; Prov 15:11; 1 Kgs 8:39; Luke 16:15; Rom 8:27; 1 Thess 2:4; 1 John 3:20).
    f) The thoughts and meditations of man (Ps 139:2; Ezek 11:5; 1 Cor 3:20).
    g) Man in the totality of his being and acts (Ps 139).
    h) Sheol and Abaddon (Prov 15:11).
    i) Man's sin and wickedness (Ps 69:5; Jer 16:17; 18:23; 32:19).

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j) Things that are contingent from a human perspective (1 Sam 23:10-13; 2 Sam 12:8; 2 Kgs 13:19; Ps 81:12-16; Jer 26:2-7; 38:17-20; Ezek 3:4-6; Matt 11:21).
k) People before they are conceived (Ps 139:13-16; Jer 1:5; Rom 8:28-30; Rev 13:8; 17:8).
l) Future things (Isa 41:22-26; 42:8-9; 43:9-12; 44:6-8; 46:9-11).
m) The days and geographical limits ordained for each person (Ps 31:15; 39:4-5; 139:7-16; Job 14:5; Acts 17:26).

5. The Character of God's Knowledge.

a) Eternal and a priori ["from the previous" – "proceeding from a known or assumed cause to a necessarily related effect" (p. 65, American Heritage Dictionary) – vs. a posteriori – "from the subsequent" – from particulars to principles, from effects to causes, inductive, empirical] (1 Cor 2:7; Rom 8:29; Eph 1:4-5; 2 Tim 1:9).

b) Perfect, never increasing (Isa 40:13ff; Rom 11:34).

c) Definite (clearly defined, precise, certain, sure, and comprehensive) (Ps 139:1-3; Heb 4:13).

d) Active, not passive. (see the next point)

6. The Effects of God's Knowledge.

Dr Mook says "These effects are subjectively transitory only in man's experience yet are an ever-"present" reality to God (not "present" in the sense of time, but in the sense of consciously perceived). To God, they are eternally consciously perceived, since He is without succession of moments."

a) The creation of the physical realm (Ps 104:24; 136:5).
b) The creation of the Church (Eph 3:10).
c) All His actions (including election and salvation) (Rom 11:33).
d) Worship from man (Ps 139:17-18; Job 11:7-9; Rom 11:33).

C. The Nature of God's Knowledge.

1. Two aspects of God's knowledge.

a) **Natural knowledge** (necessary [needed for existence, essential, indispensable] knowledge; internal knowledge; knowledge of Himself) – God's self-consciousness, His knowledge of His very essence.

b) **Free knowledge** (knowledge of vision; external knowledge; knowledge of all things outside Himself) – God's knowledge of all things actual (<u>which become</u>

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actual by His free, sovereign will based on His decree), all things that do not become reality, and how He is manifested and not manifested by these things.

2. These two aspects must be distinguished, or one has nothing but the god of pantheism. If these two aspects are the same thing, then God cannot know Himself apart from knowing Himself as being the creation.

3. But these two aspects are "organically related" (Bavinck, p. 188). And both are necessary to God.

   a) God did not arbitrarily select some of his ideas to make actual things, but His essential knowledge in all His perfections resulted in His "free knowledge," His knowing the best actuality for His self-revelation. (Because God is who He is, He does what He does.)

   b) This "free knowledge," therefore, consists of everything that can most perfectly reveal God in a creaturely way.

   c) Man can know God through His "free knowledge" as it is manifested in the created order. But man cannot know God through His "natural knowledge," since this involves knowing God immediately in His essence (as God knows Himself).

   d) Man can, to a limited extent, possess God's "free knowledge," but God's possession of His "free knowledge" is greater as infinite.

4. God's knowledge is archetypal. (Berkhof, p. 66) (archetype = original pattern)

5. He knows the universe in its eternal idea, logically prior to its time and space finite existence.

6. His knowledge is from Himself. It is not dependent on an outside source. It is independent and prior to all things outside Himself.

7. God's knowledge is intuitive, inherent, and immediate – not resulting from observation and temporal reasoning (reasoning characterized by temporal succession) – but has logical structure.

8. God's knowledge (as activity vs. content) is without succession, but simple in its exertion, and simultaneous. "He sees things at once in their totality [but also sees their distinctions and order], and not piecemeal one after another." (Berkhof, p.66)

9. God's knowledge is comprehensive and completely conscious. Man's knowledge is partial and mostly unconscious.

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10. God's knowledge is "pure act" – never passive (knowledge based on learning) or deistic (knowledge of someone removed from the objects of knowledge).

11. God's knowledge is eternally willed by Him.

Group Exercise: Look up Proverbs 15:3 and explain to me how the omniscience of God can bring both a deep comfort and a serious caution?

III. The Names of God

In the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, a person's name was important because the lexical meaning of that name reflected, or was hoped to reflect, something about the person. To God and to the people of Israel, God's names were especially important because they revealed aspects of who he was in himself, in his actions within himself, and in relation to his creation. God's names represented him so much that how one treated God's name was equivalent to how one treated God (cf. Mal. 1:6–7, 11–14). It is little wonder that at the burning bush Moses anticipated how the Hebrews in Egypt would respond to his announcement that "the God of your fathers has sent me to you"; they would ask, "What is his name?" (Ex. 3:13). And it is not surprising that God regards his name as holy and carefully assesses people's attitudes toward his name. He has promised that in the future when he restores Israel, he will be "jealous" for his "holy name" (Ezek. 39:25).[2]

Finally, before looking at the Divine names/titles that appear most often in the OT, we need to keep in mind some important general principles about names/titles:

- A title can become so much associated with a person that it becomes a personal name. Such is the case with the titles of God, e.g., Lord, King.
- Finally, always consider the following principles when studying the names/titles of God:
  - The lexical meaning is foundational, but not the full meaning of a person's names or titles.
  - Clustered names and titles co-qualify each other.
  - There is a symbiotic relationship between a name/title and its context.
  - A person's names/titles are unique to that person.
  - The meaning of a person's name/title is invested by the bearer of the name/title.
  - The meaning of a person's name/title changes as characteristics and/or status change.

1. Selected Names of God: **YAHWEH** and derivatives

[2] MacArthur, J., & Mayhue, R., eds. (2017). *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (p. 154). Crossway.

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The most common name for God in the Old Testament is Yahweh, which appears more than 6,800 times and is derived from the tetragrammaton (the four Hebrew consonants transliterated into English as "YHWH"). God revealed this name as "his name" and "my name forever" at the burning bush (Ex. 3:13–15). It speaks of God's eternal and unchanging nature. As can be seen in Exodus 3:15, the name Yahweh is what God intended by his response to Moses's question about God's name in 3:13. God responded by saying, "I AM WHO I AM" and "I AM" (Ex. 3:14), and then by identifying "LORD" (Yahweh) as "my name forever" (Ex. 3:15). Although this name of God was known before the time of the burning bush (e.g., Gen. 4:26; 5:29; 9:26; 14:22), according to Exodus 6:3, God told Moses concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "By my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them." There is no contradiction between these Genesis passages and Exodus 6:3, because the verb for "known" most likely here refers to relational knowledge. When the patriarchs addressed God as Yahweh, they did not relate to God with the understanding that Yahweh was "his name." Another possible explanation of Exodus 6:3 is to understand "known" as referring to experiential knowledge, meaning that the patriarchs did not have "the full experience of that which lies in the name."[3]

The meaning of Yahweh is important for theology. Since it is derived from the Hebrew verb for being (*khavah*), especially against the backdrop of Exodus 3:14–15, the basic meaning of Yahweh is "he is" or "he will be." So the name indicates that God "is" and "wills to be." The name implies that he had no beginning, will have no ending, and is ever present. The name also implies that his being is derived from his own self-determination to be and to be what he is, so he is eternally who and what he is.[4]

a) Yahweh-Sabaoth: "Lord of Hosts." The God who wields the power of Heaven, and controls the armies of Heaven. (Ps 89:5-8; James5:4)

- The "Hosts" =
  - Armies of Israel (Exod 7:4; 12:41; 1 Sam 17:45; 2 Sam 5:24) (cf. ark in battle – 1 Sam 4:3; 2 Sam 15:24; cf. Ps 24:8).
  - Angels (Ps 24:10; Isa 6:1-5; 9:6; Hag 2:6-9; Zech 4:6).
  - Stars (Deut 4:19; Ps 33:6; Neh 9:6).

b) Yahweh-Jireh: "The Lord will Provide." The name given to God by Abraham on Mt. Moriah when God provided a ram to save Isaac. (Gen 22:14)

c) Yahweh-Ropheh: "The Lord Heals." Yahweh is the Great Physician and Healer. (Ex 15:26)

[3] MacArthur, J., & Mayhue, R., eds. (2017). *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (p. 155). Crossway.

[4] MacArthur, J., & Mayhue, R., eds. (2017). *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (p. 156). Crossway.

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d) Yahweh-Shalom: "The Lord is Peace." God is the only source of peace of between God and man, and between man and man. This name is found only in Jdg 6:24

e) Yahweh-Nissi: "The Lord is my Banner." In battle a banner was flown to provide soldiers courage, hope, and direction. God is the banner we look to for these things and more. (Ex 17:15)

f) Yahweh-Raah: "The Lord is my Shepherd." As a shepherd cares for his sheep, Yahweh cares for His people. (Ps 23)

g) Yahweh-Shammah: "The Lord is There." Occurs only in Ezekiel 48:35 in reference to the Millennial city of Jerusalem, the seat of God's kingdom.

h) Yahweh-Tsidkenu (sid-ke-nu): "The Lord is our Righteousness." Just as we have life and salvation in God, so too we have our righteousness in God. (Jer 23:6)

2. Selected Names of God: ***El*** and derivatives

As Hebrew names for the true God, *el, eloah*, and *elohim* indicate God as supreme power, strength, and might. When depicting the true God, *el* is used with the article (e.g., Gen. 31:13; 46:3; Pss. 68:20; 77:14) or with other modifiers. For example, he is called "the God of your father" (Gen. 49:25), "God my exceeding joy" (Ps. 43:4), "the God of heaven" (Ps. 136:26), "the faithful God" (Deut. 7:9), "the Everlasting God" (Gen. 21:33), and "the living God" (Josh. 3:10; Pss. 42:2; 84:2). God is characterized by full strength, and as such, he is living, eternal, and faithful and so gives joy to those who trust in him.

The name *elohim* is a plural of the root *el* (appearing more than two thousand times), and when referring to the true God, it is probably a plural of intensity, indicating that God has such a vast fullness to his power that a plural name is appropriate to him. This is the name that appears from the beginning of the biblical revelation (Gen. 1:1) and is used in many passages interchangeably with the singular *el* and other singular names of God (e.g., Deut. 7:9; Josh. 24:19). Because the plural form *elohim* is used for a singular being, the plurality must refer to something other than multiple beings. This plural form does not prove that God is triune, but it certainly is compatible with later biblical revelation of the triunity of God (cf. Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7).[5]

[5] MacArthur, J., & Mayhue, R., eds. (2017). *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (pp. 157–158). Crossway.

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a) El: "...used 217 times in the Old Testament for the true God, means etymologically something on the order of 'Mighty One' or 'Powerful One,'and is translated in English by the term 'God.'" [2]

- Strange gods (Ps 81:9, 10; Deut 32:12, 21; Mal 2:11).
- The true God, usually with the article (Gen 46:3; Ps 68:20; 77:14) or with genitival and other modifiers (Gen 49:25; Ps 43:4; 136:26).
  "the faithful God" (Deut 7:9).
  "the eternal God" (Gen 21:33).
  "the living God" (Josh 3:10; Ps 42:2; 84:2).
  "merciful" (Exod 34:6).

b) Elohim: The plural form of "El." It is an intensification of the title "El." It represent the added excellency of the "Royal We" or the "Magisterial Plural." (2,550 times in OT)

1. Plural in meaning 63 times (Exod 20:3).
2. Singular in meaning 11 times (?) (Deut 5:26; 7:9; Josh 24:19 – contain both singular and plural forms, along with YHWH).
3. Plural of intensity, fullness, richness
   - This does not in itself refer to 3 persons, but a fullness. It allows for the later revelation of the Trinity (Gen 1:26; 3:22; 11:7). But this word in and of itself does not prove the Trinity.
   - Used of false single gods: Dagon (1 Sam 5:7); Baal-Zebub (2 Kgs 1:2); Chemosh (1 Kgs 11:33); Milcom (1 Kgs 11:33); Baal (1 Kgs 18:21, 24).

c) El-Elyon: "The most high God."

1. Mainly used in relation to Gentiles and the enemies of God and His people (Gen 14:18-22; Num 24:16; Deut 32:8; Ps 91:1, 9; 92:1; 97:9; Dan 3:26; 4:2, 17, 24, 25, 34; 5:18, 21; 7:25).

2. Possessor of heaven and earth (Gen 14:18-19, 22). Authority over heaven: Isa 14:13-14; Dan 4:35, 37. Authority over earth: Deut 32:8; 2 Sam 22:14-15; Ps 9:2-5; 21:7; 47:2-4; 56:2-3; 57:2-3; 82:6, 8; 83:16-18; 91:9-12; Dan 5:18-21).

d) El-Shaddai: "God Almighty." The God who possesses the very power of Heaven. (Gen 28:3, Gen 43:14, 49:25)

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Wed Night Discipleship
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1. Provider of fruitfulness in context of covenant (Gen 17:1; 28:3-4; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3-4; 49:25).

2. Protector (Ps 91:1).

3. The God of the Patriarchs (Exod 6:3).

e) El-Olam: "God Eternal," or "God Everlasting." Gen 21:33 – speaks of God as being eternal (cf. Ps 90:2; 93:2; 103:17; Isa 40:28).

f) El Roi: “The God who sees” Gen 16:13

g) Elohim Chayim (Hi-eem): “the Living God” also “God of life”; “God of the living” God has life in Himself and is the source of life for all created things that have life. Also, God has authority over all created things that have life. Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; 1 Sam 17:26, 36; 2 Kgs 19:4, 16; Ps 42:2; 84:2; Isa 37:4, 17; Jer 10:10; 23:36; Dan 6:20, 27; Hos 1:10

Group Exercise: Previously you looked up Proverbs 15:3 now read Heb 4:13 and discuss the magnanimous nature of God as El-Roi, the God who sees everyone and everything thought, planned, and done! Mediate for a moment on the fact that God sees all sin committed everywhere all the time!

3. Selected Images of God: God chose to reveal Himself to humans in many instances using images that would vividly portray His character. Many of these images come from human experiences (anthropomorphic), as well as the rest of creation.

a) Warrior (Exodus 15:3)

b) Architect and Builder (Hebrews 11:10)

c) Shepherd (Psalm 23:1)

d) A Rock (Deuteronomy 32:4)

e) A Shield (Psalm 84:11)

f) An Eagle (Isaiah 40:31)

g) A Lion (Isaiah 31:4)

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