

Who and What Is God? - Part 3

(Refer to the table [below](#): PRINCIPAL BIBLICAL WORDS USED FOR "GOD")

I'd like to return to the subject we've been discussing recently - the subject of *Who and What is God*. This is the 3rd of the sermons I have given on this particular subject. There is no particular reason why there are 3 - except that 3 hours is about the least amount of time you can talk about the material we have to cover!

In the first of the sermons I looked at some of the ideas of man that have besmirched and beclouded the whole understanding of God, and the way in which the ideas of philosophers have created havoc with what the Bible says.

In the second of the sermons we looked at the aspect of the names that have been used of the Deity (especially within the Old Testament), and some of the confusion that has come about as a result of the way in which they have been translated - especially the way in which they have often been translated to take into account Jewish sensitivities to one particular name, the name of *Yahweh*.

Confusion exists in literally every English translation of the Bible, in most cases simply because we hold to this idea of avoiding the use of the translation of the Hebrew name.

I would like to pick up where we finished last time and look at the aspect of the Father and the Son in Scripture. Last time we almost finished in Matthew 11:27 where Jesus Christ said to the disciples:

Matthew 11:27 "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

No one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. We read that, and we take it in a particular manner. We think that nothing was known about the Father before this. But let's just look at some other Scriptures in the New Testament and challenge our minds a little in terms of what the Bible does tell us, and come to truly understand what Jesus was saying in this Scripture.

If we go to John's gospel we have a statement made to Jesus by a man who became a disciple. Jesus was literally about to commence His ministry at this point in time. In the preceding verses he had been baptised by John the Baptist. He had called Peter, Andrew, and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, and eventually others.

John the Baptist said:

John 1:34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

A little later in the chapter Nathanael was called.

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

It is fascinating to see the response of Nathanael as he comes to Jesus Christ.

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in

whom is no guile!

48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? ...

How do You know me?

48 ... Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

Notice Nathanael's response:

49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Nathanael comes onto the scene. He has not heard Jesus speak as of this particular point in time. He has had no instruction of Jesus Christ, yet, as a result of what Jesus Christ has told him, he comes to the conclusion that He is, in fact, the Son of God!

We have to ask ourselves - where did Nathanael get the idea, literally at the point of his calling, that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, if no one knew who the Son was, but the Father, and who the Father was, but the Son? Where did he come by this? Do we understand this correctly?

As we go through the gospel accounts we find the disciples coming to understand that truly Jesus was the Son of God. But in terms of Nathanael we must ask ourselves, on what basis did Nathanael make this statement? A son presupposes the existence of a father. There is no son without a father, especially in terms of the way in which the Bible was written. Genealogy was always presented from a patriarchal aspect, not from a matriarchal aspect, therefore there had to be a father for there to be a son.

So how does this reconcile with Christ's statement in Matthew chapter 11? The problem becomes more complex - just in case you think you have an easy answer to it! I guess the easy answer to it is that he had heard John the Baptist say: "This is the Son of God," and that he was just repeating what John the Baptist had said.

But as I said, it is more complex than that. The other end of Christ's ministry is recorded in Mark 14 and Matthew 27. Let's go to Mark 14 because it highlights another point for us as well. Jesus has been arraigned before the Sanhedrin. He is confronted by the questions of the High Priest. He kept silent. He didn't answer the questions, the interrogations.

Mark 14:61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

What is the High Priest saying? What does the High Priest understand? The High Priest clearly was of the understanding that the Messiah, the Christ, God's anointed, could also be referred to as "the Son of the Blessed!" I use this example because Mark very nicely accedes to the Jewish sensitivities, and shows probably what the High Priest really would have said - because the High Priest would not have said *Yahweh* on this occasion, and he certainly would not have said *Theos*. He would have used the euphemism *Blessed* to avoid the problem of pronouncing the name of God, *Yahweh*. The High Priest had an understanding of both the Godhead - that God could have a Son! It was also a statement about the High Priest's understanding of the true nature of the Messiah! It is very telling!

How does Jesus respond to it?

62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Jesus Christ makes a very interesting statement. In fact He provides two very important pieces of information. Firstly He describes Himself as being "I am," which was the way in which Yahweh first revealed Himself to Moses; the way in which the name of Yahweh was first introduced in Exodus 3 - "I

am!" In other words, Jesus Christ's response was a very loaded response. There was nothing held back. Then He goes on to tell the High Priest:

62 ... and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

What was the High Priest to make of that? The High Priest knew the Scriptures. He knew very clearly that Jesus, in making the statement "I am" was defining Himself. Not only that, He was quoting from Daniel chapter 7. The High Priest understood that very clearly.

Daniel had had a vision:

Daniel 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

There are two parties here. The Ancient of days who has been described from verse 9 onwards, and then the Son of man. Daniel saw both of these parties. The Son of man came with the clouds of heaven. He came to the Ancient of days. They brought Him near before Him.

14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

We've looked at the book of Daniel recently, and the way in which the Jews understood the fact of a Messiah being revealed in terms of the book of Daniel.

We also looked at the way in which Jesus Christ was accused before the High Priest, before that very same Sanhedrin in Mark 14; of being One who would destroy the temple, and build it again without hands - and the way in which the Jews took that as being a reference to Daniel chapter 2 - the way in which there was going to be "a stone cut out without hands." They understood these interrelationships very, very clearly.

Daniel established the idea of duality in the Godhead - of the Ancient of days and the Son of man - but NOT DIRECT SONSHIP between the two. One is referred to as the Son of man. On the other hand, the Ancient of days is a name which was given to what we might call the Father. Other Scriptures speak to that end.

If you are alert to what Jesus Christ said in Mark 14, you can be very much aware that He did not quote just Daniel 7. Jesus Christ did something which He did on various occasions, and which was a common Jewish practice in terms of the Scripture - of collapsing two Scriptures into one - because everyone knew they related together.

What was it that He said in Mark 14 that did not come from Daniel 7? It was the statement that He would be "seated at the right hand of power!" That comes from somewhere else, but Jesus Christ linked those two Scriptures together because He knew the way in which the chief priest would understand and appreciate them.

The aspect of sonship is fully explained in other Scriptures. Let's have a look at that before we go to the aspect of "the right hand of power." The ideal place to go for this aspect of sonship is in Isaiah 9 where we have a prophecy about the birth of a son:

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

The son is linked to the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. In many ways the English translation of this is awkward, because translators try and sectionalise the aspect of the latter part of verse 6, and try and work out how these various facets of the name all apply to Jesus Christ. They say: "We can understand Him being called 'Wonderful,' 'Counsellor.' Yes we understand 'mighty God,' and 'The Prince of Peace' is easy. But how do we call the child 'The everlasting Father'?"

In the process they create elaborate means to try and show how the son is the father! They miss the point of what is being stated here.

Let's read it from the Jewish translation. The Tanakh says:

6 A child has been born to us. A son has been given us, and authority has been settled on his shoulders. He has been named "The mighty God is planning grace, the Eternal Father a peaceable ruler."

These are not individual little bits of names which can be taken out of context. This is a statement of how the Father sees the Son - and the purpose for the Son. We have other examples of this in God's word. Sometimes we read names in the Bible without ever stopping and thinking what they mean.

For instance, what does "Elijah" mean? It simply means "my God is Yahweh." Does it mean to say that Elijah was Yahweh? Not at all, but it's a statement about the man Elijah and his relationship with God. God inspired that he be called that. The great high point of Elijah's ministry was challenging the nation of Israel to choose WHO WAS GOD! The statement was there before them the whole time: "My God is Yahweh."

Another example is *Joel* - it simply means: "*Yahweh* is God."

Micah is a contraction of: "who is like *Yahweh*?"

Isaiah means: "*Yahweh* is salvation."

All of these prophets have names which were a statement about God and His relationship with His creation.

Jesus Christ was going to be no exception. A child was to be born. His name was to be: "The mighty God is planning grace, the Eternal Father is planning a peaceable ruler." We might ask ourselves: "How does this apply to Jesus Christ?" The Father's name is placed upon Him, insofar as He acts under the Father's authority and towards the Father's ends.

Jesus Christ said to His Father: "I have come to do Your will. I have finished the work You gave Me to do."

He came to do His Father's work. The terms create a statement about the plan of God!

He has been named "The mighty God is planning grace, the Eternal Father a peaceable ruler." We might ask ourselves, is that not totally in agreement with Christ's expressed relationship with His Father? He came to show the true grace of God. He came to show the true way to peace in a remarkable manner.

So we have a Scripture here that talks of the Father and Son relationship in a very profound way. People understood it to be Messianic: the Son to be the Messiah, having God's name placed upon Him.

The second Psalm is another occasion which talks of the sonship. We might ask ourselves, to whom does this Psalm relate? Who are the principle parties within this Psalm?

***Psalm 2:1 Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD (Yahweh) and against His Anointed, saying,
3 "Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away
Their cords from us."
4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The Lord (Adonai) shall hold them in derision.***

***5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,
And distress them in His deep displeasure:***

Then quoting, it says:

***6 "Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion."
7 "I will declare the decree:
The LORD (Yahweh) has said to Me,
'You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
8 Ask of Me, and I will give You
The nations for Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth for Your possession.
9 You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel."
10 Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
11 Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
12 Kiss the Son ...***

... in other words, show obeisance to the Son ...

***12 ... lest He be angry,
And you perish in the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.***

To whom does this relate? Are we talking about a physical king? Most of the marginal references refer us to the son of David, in terms of the physical lineage. They point us to 2nd Samuel chapter 7, where Yahweh promises David that he will have a son, and that He will be a father to him. Or they point us to Psalm 89, where it talks in the same way.

Is it a physical descendant that is being talked about here? Or is it Somebody else? The Psalm is a dialogue between various parties at different levels. In the first 5 verses we have a human commentator, commenting about the way in which humanity relates to the Eternal, to Yahweh, and against His anointed.

In verse 4 we find that *Adonai* (the lower case "Lord") will hold them in derision.

In verse 6 through 9 we have a divine pronouncement and discussion where a divine Being said:

***6 "Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion."
7 "I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
'You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth for Your possession.
9 You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel."
10 Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
11 Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
12 Kiss the Son ...***

If we look at those last verses, to whom does the rest of the Bible ascribe the ability to rule with a rod of iron and to break nations like potters' vessels?

It is NOT to the Davidic line! As much as they would have loved to have done it, God never gave them that

power over the other nations. They never had that same level of power. But these same attributes, the same powers over nations ARE ascribed to Jesus Christ and to those who rule with Him in the Kingdom of God!

So here we have an occasion where Yahweh is speaking to His Anointed as His Son! We find the human commentator coming back on the scene, toward the end of the Psalm. Taking from what has been stated by God, he says:

***10 Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
11 Serve the LORD (Yahweh) with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
12 Kiss the Son ...***

Not only are you to serve Yahweh with fear, but you are also to kiss the Son, which may seem a strange phenomena for us today. But in those days, kissing the Son was a means of obeisance, of showing your fealty to a ruler. So they are told to:

***12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
And you perish in the way ...***

Why? Because He has the means whereby they can perish. He can break them like a potter's vessel.

12 ... When His wrath is kindled but a little ...

It concludes by saying:

12 ... Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

Put their trust in whom? I would suggest it is The Son. They put their trust in the Son, the One who is described in verse 2 as being the Anointed. You might say this confuses things a little more - because now we are using the name Yahweh for the Being we would call the Father!

Let's move on. Let's go to the right hand of power, and look at Psalm 110. I will use the Hebrew, rather than the awkward translation.

***Psalm 110:1 Yahweh said to my Adonai,
"Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."
2 Yahweh will send the rod of Your strength out of Zion.
Rule in the midst of Your enemies!
3 Your people shall be volunteers
In the day of Your power;
In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
You have the dew of Your youth.
4 Yahweh has sworn
And will not relent,
"You are a priest forever
According to the role of Melchizedek."
5 Adonai is at Your right hand;
He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath.
6 He shall judge among the nations,
He shall fill the places with dead bodies,
He shall execute the heads of many countries.***

You can see why I said what I did about Psalm 2 and Who it is relating to, because Psalm 110 speaks to this very same Being as well!

So, in terms of Psalm 110, let's ask ourselves in the first verse, who is who?

***Psalm 110:1 Yahweh said to my Adonai,
"Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."***

In case you have not remembered, this is where the rest of Jesus Christ's quotation to the High Priest arose.

***Mark 14:62 And Jesus said ... ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power,
and coming in the clouds of heaven.***

That was not lost on the High Priest! But here we have, once again, an aspect of duality. We have two beings: one referred to as *Yahweh*, and the other as *Adonai*. It is not speaking of David as the king, as commentators would love to have us believe, because Jesus Christ makes it abundantly plain that it is not: that it is talking about only one individual - the Son of God, as we will see.

In Matthew 22, Jesus Christ is having a discussion with the religious leaders of the day.

***Matthew 22:41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,
42 saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him,
"The Son of David."***

You might say that that's the safe answer, the safe way out! Because we can take the term "Son of David" in two ways. We can take it as being a physical descendant of David, and so the Messiah would be no more than a physical being. Many people saw the Messiah that way.

Look at some of the people who pretended to be messiahs over the two centuries from before Christ until the 2nd century. How did they see themselves? They saw themselves as being a physical descendant of David, and they considered that that qualified them to be the Messiah. But Jesus Christ was raising the ante; He was raising the stakes, because the Messiah was not just of the physical descent of David, He was even more. His spiritual parentage was of God! Yes, He could claim David as a physical progenitor, but He could also claim God.

***43 He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying:
44 'The LORD said to my Lord,
"Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool'"?
45 "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?"***

You may notice that there is a difference with these Scriptures in your own Bible. Look at verse 44:

44 'The LORD said to my Lord ...

How does the first "Lord" appear in your Bible? It appears in capital letters (LORD)! Yet there is no such word in the Greek language that should be translated in caps! In fact, the two words "LORD" and "Lord" are EXACTLY THE SAME in the Greek! They are both *Kurios*. "*Kurios* said to my *Kurio* ..." - it's a change of the grammatical case, but it's the same Greek word. It's amazing how we play games in our translations and our printings to try and convey an idea. The same word is used here.

The important thing is that Jesus Christ is pointing out that Psalm 110 does not relate to a physical man. It relates to the divine. It is no use ducking the issue and saying: "We like to think of the Messiah as being as a son of David."

He said the Scripture DEMANDS that you be honest, and that you realise that the Messiah is not ONLY a son of David by descent, but He is also a divine Being. He is "God with us!"

Psalm 110 is not just about David. We cannot put it aside and say that it is Yahweh talking to David. No, this is two divine beings speaking to one another, addressing one another! Let's go back to Psalm 110 and look at some of the issues that are there. Notice the usage of Adonai in verse 1:

Psalm 110:1 Yahweh said to my Adonai ...

The usage of *Adonai* is a form of address to a superior. It is used a number of occasions in terms of a master, in terms of a husband - but most specifically it is used of God.

It is also interesting that it is used of Yahweh. Look at this example from Isaiah:

***Isaiah 1:24 Therefore the Adonai says,
The Yahweh of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel ...***

Here, Yahweh is describing Himself as being Adonai! That is just one example. You can go throughout Isaiah and you can frequently find this type of expression where it says: "Thus saith *Adonai*, the *Yahweh* of hosts ..."

When Moses was discussing the exodus with Yahweh in Exodus 4:10, how does he address Yahweh? He addresses Him as *Adonai*! It is a form of great respect. The Jews very clearly were able to differentiate themselves between the occasions in which the term *Adonai* is used in terms of humans, and of God.

When they added vowels to the Hebrew language, they put different vowels when it related to God, than when it related to human beings. So they were able to make that differentiation. They understood very clearly that this Psalm is talking about the divine, not about physical human beings. This aspect of Yahweh being referred to as Adonai is quite common.

***Psalm 8:1 O Yahweh, our Adonai,
How excellent is Your name in all the earth ...***

The two names are used interchangeably in quite an interesting way.

***1 ... How excellent is Your name in all the earth,
Who have set Your glory above the heavens!***

So the name Adonai can be used of Yahweh.

But then in Psalm 110:1 we have two beings titled Yahweh respectively. It's not uncommon in Scripture to see the Being we know as the Son described in the same manner as the Being we call the Father!

Compare the way in which Daniel sees the Ancient of days in vision (Daniel 7:9) compared with the way in which Jesus Christ reveals Himself to John in Revelation 1. They are the same! They have white hair, with a face burnished like gold. The same imagery is used of both of them.

Notice what Jesus Christ said to Philip at the last Passover, when Philip said: "Show us the Father." He said to Philip: "Have I been so long with you and you ask Me to show you the Father? If you have seen Me you have seen the Father.

Why? Because they are the same in terms of their character. The spiritual character of which they are composed is exactly the same. Whether one is half an inch taller than the other is immaterial. That's not the important thing that Jesus Christ was trying to convey. The important thing is that they are the same in terms of their character, in terms of their goals, in terms of their aspirations, and in terms of their purpose. They are also the same in the way in which they are going to accomplish it.

The Son is always willing to submit Himself to the Father's way of doing things, happily and joyfully - to accomplish it.

When we look at Scripture, you might say that the term *Yahweh* aptly describes the Father just as it does the Being who became Jesus Christ. He is "I am: I am that I am." He is also the One who was "yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8); the "one who was, and is, and is to come" (Revelation 4:8).

These are statements that are used of Jesus Christ that can also relate to the Father. Psalm 110 does speak of two Yahwehs!

Psalm 110:5 (King James Version) The Lord (Adonai) at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

If you take another example of the Hebrew Bible you will find that the Jews are divided as to what verse 5 should say. A good portion of the Masoretic manuscripts say: "Yahweh at your right hand." Yahweh is talking to someone at His right hand who is also referred to as Yahweh! That's interesting!

So the Jewish texts support both readings - whether it should be in capitals or lower case: Adonai or Yahweh. Here we have a case of the One we call the Father speaking to the Son. They can both be described as being Yahweh - they are the self eternal ones, the self-existent ones.

So in Psalm 110 we have two divine beings who can be named Yahweh. The one at the right hand is in the relationship to the One on His left as of a Son. He also fulfils the role of the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, so it also clarifies who, in fact, Melchisedec was, as the writer of Hebrews quite correctly understood.

The One at the right hand is also entrusted with rulership. You might say: "How can we differentiate between these two Yahwehs?" Very simply - by the context. It's the context that will help differentiate between them. The number of occasions where the Bible speaks of the One we know as the Father in the Old Testament as being Yahweh are very few and far between. We have basically covered them today.

If we go into the New Testament we find at times that we have to scratch our heads and, for instance, say: "Hold on, who is John speaking of in the book of Revelation? Is he speaking of the Father or is he speaking of Jesus Christ?"

There are times when even John in the book of Revelation speaks of Jesus Christ in exactly the same way that he speaks of the Father. How do we differentiate between the two? It is by the context.

It wasn't a problem for the writers of the Bible. They understood those things. The problem is for us, at the beginning of the 21st century, who have had our minds clouded, and God's word clouded, in many cases, by generations of people who have sought to hide the true meaning of God's word.

So Daniel 7, Daniel 2 and Psalm 110 all speak of the same situation - of a Father and a Son; one who has ULTIMATE POWER and the other to whom RULERSHIP is given.

Surprise, surprise, I think that we have to recognise that the High Priest in Mark 14, understood the Scriptures much better than most Protestant commentators! He understood perfectly what Jesus Christ was saying, and he understood perfectly what Scriptures Jesus Christ was referring to. He had no question about it in his own mind.

We have talked about the Hebrew, and we have talked about the Masoretes on a number of occasions. We have talked about the Masoretic text. I would like to show you a page from the Masoretic text, but before I do so, I would like to introduce another concept for you - and that is what we have referred to in the past as "the inspired margin!"

Where do you think the idea came from? I am going to show you a Bible that was copied by hand before the Normans invaded England. This section of this particular Bible dates back to the beginning of the 11th century - about 1020 is the date that it is considered to have been copied. It is a Masoretic text - and it is complete with inspired margins! All of the important notes are at the top or base of the column. The little notes in the margins refer to other Scriptures or the number of times a particular word is used, and how it is used.

This was referred to as the Leningrad Codex. It was found in Cairo in the early part of the 19th century, in a synagogue store room. It dates to the latter part of the 10th, or early part of the 11th century. It is still extant at this point in time.

I show you this because the first time that somebody ever sat down and did some substantive work on the marginal notes in these Bibles was at the end of the 19th century. It was an English Jewish scholar by the name of Christian Ginsberg. He sat down, and for the first time for English speaking peoples, codified all what is known as the *Masorah* (the notes in the margins, and the header and the footer of the page) for an English speaker.

Up until that time every translation of the Bible had been done without any regard to what was in the margins. They didn't understand it. At times they became so artistically done that most non Hebrew readers would have thought that the scribes had just been trying to decorate the Bible.

But all of these have a substantial amount of meaning to them. Most of them do not change the meaning of the text, but they also include the occasions where the Jews have changed the text. Up until the beginning of the 19th century most English speakers were largely unaware of it. Ginsberg produced an incredible tome of work at that time, at the end of the 19th century, detailing all of this, showing the rules and the way in which it was to be read and understood; detailing what was what, and how to understand it.

Over a century later he is still the authority on the Masorah to this day! If you find a new book written on the Masorah it will be totally based upon what Ginsberg has done. His work was the standard reference for all studies of the Masorah over a hundred years later.

Having picked up a copy of Ginsberg, and having read through the introduction, I find it fascinating that he gives credit to a very close friend and colleague - a man called E. W. Bullinger. The two men worked together. Bullinger was the man who produced what is called *The Companion Bible*. He has a number of appendices in the back of his book and at times people like to place a lot of emphasis upon those appendices.

Like every commentator, there is good and there is bad. There is not-so-good and not-so-bad! His details cover the whole spectrum. On the one hand, Bullinger was very good because he sought to read the Bible in its context and he sought to put it back into its context, rather than read it in terms of the way in which the so-called Christian church had read it over the years. He wanted to contextualise it.

He also very clearly understood that in contextualising it, you had to understand things like the Holy Days to understand the New Testament! So some of his re-creations of the gospels, in terms of the Passover and so forth, come the closest to the truth and reality that many people have ever gotten to.

He still gets waylaid by the idea that Sunday is the correct day of worship. Ginsberg didn't have that great an influence upon him! But for those of you who want to study a little more on some of these areas, Bullinger does provide probably one of the best examples of the usages of the names of God - and of the ways in which it has been modified by the Jews, and those modifications that have been misunderstood by translators. It is very useful from that point of view. He has three or four appendices which deal with that.

But his appendices are based upon an understanding of the whys and wherefores of the Masoretic text, and understanding where it was that the Jews changed the text. The Jews did not cover their paths when they changed the text. They kept what it should be, so that later generations would know it had been changed. We don't need to get into that at this point in time.

But where does all of this lead us? Firstly the concept of the Father figure and the Son in a Godhead was known from the Old Testament. If people were prepared to be honest and put Scriptures together, they could come to understand there was a Father and Son relationship. There was a duality.

Philo considered the Father as a way off figure - a transcendent figure who had nothing to do with us. Philo came to some of his reasonings based on his Platonic ideas rather than the Scripture. Yet the idea that there was a Father figure was not lost, even on a person like Philo!

Secondly, the Jews don't really know Who they worship. They worship whom? They worship Yahweh. Yahweh was the God of Israel. In fact, the Being they claim to worship was the Being they rejected! They didn't even recognise Him when He came. They didn't recognise Him at all.

If they could not recognise Jesus Christ as being the Yahweh of the Old Testament, who they worshipped, how could they ever recognise a Father? How was the Father revealed?

Israel had worshipped Yahweh as their God. Although the name can be applied to the Father, the Bible makes it clear that the Word, the Being that became Jesus Christ, was the God, the Yahweh of Israel.

What about the importance of the Father? Jesus showed that it was the Father that is to be worshipped. Jesus did not come to have people worship Him.

What was the focus of prayer? To whom do we pray? Who did Jesus tell us to pray to? We pray to the Father, in, and by the name - or authority - of Jesus Christ. If we have requests, we address those requests to the Father by the authority of Jesus Christ, as Matthew 6 and John 16 show.

Very clearly, the Father is the ultimate Being in the universe! He is the One to whom Jesus Christ has submitted Himself.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Who is it? Whose love is it that is being expressed here? Obviously the Son had to have love for the creation as well. But the Son is saying that the Father so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

When Jesus was praying to His Father in John 17, He started that prayer by saying:

***John 17:1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,
2 "as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.
3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."***

Eternal life involves an understanding and a relationship with the Father as well as Jesus Christ!

Notice John a little later, in his first epistle:

1 John 1:3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

I give you those Scriptures because a few years ago we were told to be "Christ-centred." I wonder what the end result of being Christ-centred, in the way in which it is expressed in this world, is? Does it mean that you become like the Jews and lose sight of the Father? That's a good question.

I always considered it to be somewhat of an affront to the church when we considered the role of Christ in the Passover, and the role of Christ in terms of the Holy Days. But the idea of being Christ-centred is perhaps a little more damnable than we ever considered it possible to be - because if you become Christ-centred, what happens to the Father? He gets shut out of your sight!

Christ came to reveal the Father so that we could have fellowship with Him, yet the end result of being "Christ-centred" is that you just have fellowship with Christ.

Israel as a physical nation never had a relationship with the Father. It had a relationship with the One who we refer to as the Word, who became Jesus Christ. He was their God.

We, whom the Father has called to Christ, can develop a relationship with our Father. It's rather interesting to go back to Matthew 11 and stop and consider it again, because Jesus Christ said:

Matthew 11:27 "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

There has to be a revealing of that relationship! It is not something that can be had by academics alone. It can only be understood by those to whom the Son reveals Himself. But there is something circular here - because to whom can the Son really reveal Himself?

John 6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him ...

The Son only reveals Himself to those that the Father gives to Him! So we come back to the very issue of calling - of being called by the Father into a relationship with the Son which is not an end in itself. It is so that we can have a relationship with the Father as well, through the very sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and that we can come to understand who the Father is.

Unless we understand that aspect of the fact that we have to be called into a relationship with Christ and that that calling is done by the Father, we will never have a correct understanding of who and what God is.

So when Jesus Christ talked about revealing the Father, He was revealing it to the babes, so to speak, because those were the ones that the Father had called to Christ at that point in time. They were the ones who were really able to understand and appreciate, in a way in which Nathanael probably had no comprehension, and certainly a way in which the High Priest had no comprehension that Jesus Christ was, in fact, the Son of God, and understand the duality that had existed right from the beginning of God's word.

The term *Elohim* is not plural by accident! It's not a quirk of Hebrew that the word is plural - because there are, in fact, two Beings who are God! We refer to them at this point in time as the Father and the Son. They have been known by other names at other times - the Ancient of Days, the Son of Man, Yahweh, Adonai - all of these names are appropriate and proper in their own way.

But we only unravel it by the result of God's calling and coming to understand it - so that we can cut through the flack that exists within this world.

Paul, speaking about the Godhead said:

Romans 1:19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

We have already read from the Encyclopaedia Judaica the way in which, at the end of the first century, the God of Israel became the "god" of the philosophers. He became made in the image of man and man's philosophy. They lost contact with the true God. It's very, very sad.

It's worthwhile rehearsing a quotation that we started this series of sermons with: a very appropriate quotation from a German Catholic theologian, Hans Kung. He said:

"No [name] has been so misused, defiled and mauled. Men have torn it apart into religious factions, have killed for it and died for it ...

"There is no comparable term to designate the supreme reality and yet it is so often used to disguise the worst impieties."

That is his assessment of the way in which humanity has come to abuse and misuse the very name of God. He doesn't have the right answer, but he certainly sees what humanity has done to the name of God because it doesn't know it. It doesn't understand it.

You and I, as the result of our calling, have the privilege of being able to come to have a relationship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. And as a result of that relationship we have the opportunity of knowing and understanding Who and what God is!

PRINCIPAL BIBLICAL WORDS USED FOR "GOD"			
(Download printer-friendly PDF version of this table here)			
ENGLISH ¹	HEBREW	GREEK ²	COMMENTS
GOD	Elohim	Theos	Plural in Hebrew, singular in Greek
	Eloah	Theos	Singular of Elohim
	El		Generic name for a God. When used of pagan deities, shown in the Bible as "god."
LORD	Yahweh	Kurios	In Hebrew other terms are often added to expand the meaning of the Name
LORD God	Yahweh Elohim	Kurios ó Theos	
Lord	Adonai	Kurios	
Lord God	Adonai Yahweh	Kurios	English expression derives from Jewish sensitivities to using the "Ineffable Name"
¹ As translated in the majority of English translations. ² Some exceptions do occur, so this lists the principal translation into Greek as used in the Septuagint and New Testament. A complete listing can be generated by the use of an Analytical Concordance.			

... Peter Nathan
08 Nov 03

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