

The Name: Elohim

Theme Verse: Malachi 1:11

"For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations."

Outline:

Introduction:

Names are a big deal to people. As a teacher, I often get corrected if I say a student's name wrong or spell it incorrectly, though they don't seem to mind calling me "Mrs" or by another teacher's name, but names do speak of relationships and can inform us of character.

Some of my names are:

- Paul
- Baby
- Mr. Anderson
- Son
- Dad

As important as names are to us today, they carried much more meaning and significance in the near East, the setting of biblical history.

For them, the very existence of a thing was tied up in its name. The name was an indicator of character and to know the name of someone, especially a divine being, is to be able to call on them and their power.

In Genesis 32, Jacob wrestles with an angel and loses; his name is changed from Jacob to Israel and he asks for the name of the one he wrestled with.

Names are important.

In Exodus 3, when God charges Moses with going to the people of Israel and telling them God would deliver them, Moses said they would want to know WHO is delivering them, or what is the name of this god who is going to deliver?

It's when God reveals himself as Yahweh, the Great I Am.

Yet the first name God reveals for himself is not in Exodus, but Genesis.

Before we go there, I think it's helpful to note why we are studying different names of God as they appear in scripture.

1. To honor the name
 - a. Exodus 20:7
 - b. Not speaking about expletives, but those who are in relationship with God must honor His name in their lives

- c. We are accountable for reflecting His character
- d. ***That Anderson Kid***
- e. The name given and honored helps govern the life of the one who takes the name.

2. To praise the name
 - a. Psalm 8:1
 - i. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.
 - b. Psalm 48:10
 - i. As your name, O God, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is filled with righteousness.
 - c. We are able to praise and worship God more effectively when we know more about him through his names
3. The protection of the name
 - a. Proverbs 18:10
 - i. The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.
 - b. A strong tower

Three principles to keep in view

1. The names are a gift from a loving father
2. The names are the key to a growing relationship
3. The names are the character of God displayed

With these things in view, let's take a look at Genesis 1 and the first time God reveals His name.

Name: Elohim

Etymology: a name that means “god” or “ruler”, a judge, to be great or mighty

First Appearance: Genesis 1:1

Appears more than 2500 times throughout the bible

The first appearance of Elohim is in the first line of the bible.

Genesis 1:1

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

- A well-known and often quoted verse, easily remembered and instantly recognized. God's name that he chooses to reveal himself to mankind is Elohim.

The name Elohim is not a proper name, like my name is Paul. It is usually used to designate something of a high order, think leaders, kings, and gods. They could all be called elohim. We usually translate it to god in English, but we get lost in the many times we see “god” in the old testament.

Elohim appears as God’s name first in Genesis 1:1 and is singly used through all of chapter 1 and the beginning of chapter 2.

The significance of Elohim in chapter one is far greater than we give it credit for.

In all other religions, the gods were birthed, created, sprung out of, or shaped from something that already existed. Heaven and earth were formed out of the remains of fallen gods or monsters. In short, creation in the ancient world was taking what was already there and shaping everything else from that.

But in the beginning, before all things, God created the heavens and the earth.

The term used is *ex nihilo* and gives us the understanding that God created everything out of nothing.

He didn’t kill, grow, or use anything that existed before. From the words of his mouth, it came about.

- The God says statements Genesis 1

“Genesis 1 helps us see that nothing in creation existed before God and it all came about from him speaking it to be.

And he didn’t only speak it to be but by the words of his mouth, it keeps going.

- Hebrews 1:3
 - He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

We can see in Job that God not only spoke things into being, but knows them.

- Chapter 38-41
- Verse 4 of chapter 38, “where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth,”

God goes on to describe the heavens and the earth, the seas, and the animals, asking Job what hand he had in creating, ordering, or controlling any of these things.

God knows his creation.

Isaiah 40:28

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.”

God is everlasting, creator, unlimited in power, and impossible to fully know.

But...

Isaiah 40:29-31

"He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases his strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young man shall fall exhausted, BUT they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

He cares for his creation. He gives power and strength to those who need it.

We live in a world that is more and more believing that everything was created by chance and that God cannot be known.

His word shows us otherwise. He is the creator of all, and all he created is good, and we are loved by our creator.

In fact God loves us so much that he knew we would need saving. That our hearts have caused us to rebel against him and reject his authority as creator and his love as his children.

He loves you so much that he sent his son Jesus to take the punishment for your sin so that you might be made right with him.

Small Group:

Icebreaker:

What's a name or title you have (or had) that means a lot to you, and why?

Discussion Questions

1. The Bible introduces God first as *Elohim*: Creator, ruler, mighty one.

How does starting Scripture with God as Creator shape the way we understand everything else that follows in the Bible?

In what ways can we honor God's name in our daily lives?

2. Elohim as Creator

Genesis 1 shows God (Elohim) creating everything ex nihilo; out of nothing. How does this shape the way you think about God's power?

3. God's Greatness & Care

Isaiah 40 shows Elohim as both everlasting and unsearchable, yet also giving strength to the weary. Why is it important to hold both truths together?

- When have you personally experienced God's strength in a season of weakness?

4. Living in Today's World

Our culture often says life is a product of chance. How does knowing God as Elohim, the intentional Creator, challenge that view?

- How might this truth change the way we see ourselves and others?