

## **January 31, 2010 – NAMES OF GOD - ELOHIM**

Today we're continuing with series of worship reflections called "Names of God." Our intent for the next several weeks, God willing, is that our corporate worship will be focused each week on one of the different Biblical "names" for God.

In scripture, a person's name is often meant to tell us something important *about* that person, and the same principle holds true for the names of God. I hope you will find that each "name" is an invitation to worship – to draw near and know God in *your own* life as a manifestation of this particular name.

For the past two weeks we've focused on the name YHWH – the most personal and most frequently used name for God in scripture.

Today we're going to look at the *second* most common name for God in the Bible, a name that, interestingly, is probably one of His *least* "personal" names.

It's the name ELOHIM.

The Hebrew word ELOHIM occurs well over 2000 times in scripture.

It's usually simply translated as "God."

The *majority* of the time, when you see the word "God" in the Old Testament, it's a translation of the Hebrew word ELOHIM.

The reason I'm saying that it's not a very "personal" name is this:

About 90% of the time, when the OT uses the word ELOHIM, it's used to refer to the one true God.

Occasionally, however, ELOHIM is used in the Bible to refer to pagan gods, or to angels, or even to powerful men.

It's a little bit of a "generic" term for deity.

Let's take a moment and dig a little more deeply into this word.

The basic root of the word ELOHIM is the Hebrew word "EL," which means "mighty, strong, prominent."

EL is a word that is *also* often translated as "God" – again, *usually* referring to the true God, but occasionally to a false god.

What's interesting about ELOHIM is that it's a *plural* word.

(EL is singular, but ELOHIM is plural.)

When ELOHIM refers to angels or pagan gods, it refers to *more than one* of them.

For example, in Exodus chapter 20, the Bible says:

**Exodus 20:3** "You shall have no other gods before Me."

“Gods” is a translation of the word ELOHIM.

It’s *plural*, it’s a word used to refer to “more than one” god.

*Except* when it’s used to refer to the one true God.

Interesting... why would the Bible use a *plural* word as a “name” for a *singular* God?

There are a couple of possible reasons. (Both of which, I suspect, are probably true)

One is that our singular God exists as three persons – Father, Son, and Spirit.

So the name ELOHIM may be a reflection of the triune nature of our God.

The plurality of this word is at least consistent with the doctrine of the trinity.

(1 God expressed as 3 persons.)

And, in scripture, we sometimes see ELOHIM refer to Himself as “us” and “our”...

**Genesis 1:26** Then God (ELOHIM) said, “Let Us make man in Our image...”

That’s *one* possible reason for using a plural word as a name for God.

Then there’s *also* the fact that the Hebrew language sometimes uses the plural form of a word as a literary device to emphasize intensity.

Instead of meaning “more” than one person, it means “more” of some characteristic.

In other words, ELOHIM could be used because God possesses a plurality of power and might. He is “more” GOD than all the other so-called gods, so the plural form of the word is used.

But... whatever the *reason* for this name, it’s clear that ELOHIM is a name that is important and significant. The Bible itself begins with these words:

*Genesis 1:1*

In the beginning GOD (ELOHIM) created the heavens and the earth.

The first thing we’re told about ELOHIM is that He created everything.

“In the beginning, ELOHIM...”

Before there was anything – before matter or energy or space or time – there was ELOHIM - the triune GOD – Father, Son, and Spirit – existing in a perfect love relationship.

Our minds just *spin* with questions!

If there was no space, where was He? Some other realm or dimension?

What came *before* God? (Nothing. God is timeless, He is eternal.)

Well then, what came before eternity? (There *is* no “before” eternity.)

The Bible says: “From **everlasting** to **everlasting** You are God.” (Psalm 90:2)

These kinds of truths are *impossible* for finite creatures like you and I to fathom. HOWEVER... **don't** just blow this off. Even if we can't truly *fathom* this, we can still *learn* from it. We can still use the name of ELOHIM as an invitation to worship God!

It can be tempting to think that this stuff has nothing to do with you and your life. But, in reality, this has EVERYTHING to do with you and your life.

If ELOHIM was "in the beginning," then He has no parents, He has nothing previous to Him that explains Him.

God can say "I AM WHO I AM" *because* He is ELOHIM – the mighty One, the Creator of all things.

Nothing *shapes* ELOHIM. He is the Shaper of everything.

We don't define Him – He defines us! He created us!

This drives right to the heart of the most fundamental questions of life.

**Why are you here? Why do you even exist?**

To answer these questions, you have to begin with ELOHIM.

I think the reason that so many people in our day assume that life has no ultimate purpose or meaning is because they assume that there is no God.

Apart from ELOHIM - a mighty God who created all things for His purpose - there IS no purpose! We exist for *His* purpose! The Bible says:

**1 Corinthians 8:6a**

There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him.

We tend to get this wrong. And I mean *all* of us - including those of us who ought to know better! We typically start at the wrong place – ourselves.

We ask *self-centered* questions and, therefore, we get *meaningless* answers.

You didn't create yourself, so there's no way you can tell yourself what you were created for!

You cannot arrive at your life's purpose by starting with a focus on yourself.

You must begin with God, ELOHIM, your Creator.

You exist only because ELOHIM wills that you exist.

We were made by God and for God, and until we understand that, life will *never* make sense.

It is only in ELOHIM that we discover our origin, our identity, our purpose, and our destiny. God says:

*Isaiah 43:3, 6-7*

“I am YHWH (the LORD), your ELOHIM (**God**)...

Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth - everyone who is called by My name, whom I **created for My glory**, whom I formed and made.”

If you consider yourself a son or daughter of God, someone called by His name, ELOHIM says you were “created for My glory.”

You were created by God for His glory, and His alone.

Are you ready to *embrace* this?

To *know* God as ELOHIM, the mighty Creator with the *right* to declare that your purpose is His glory, that you exist to spread His fame and to amplify the honor of His name?

Just listen to King David responding to ELOHIM and embracing this in his life...

*Psalms 86:8-12*

Lord, there is no one like You among the gods, and there are no works like Yours.

For You are great, and do wondrous things; You alone are God (ELOHIM).

Teach me Your way, O YHWH, and I will walk in Your truth;

give me an undivided heart, that I may fear Your name.

I will praise You with all my heart, O Lord my God (ELOHIM),

and I will glorify Your name forever.

This is the meaning of life, the reason you exist:

to praise ELOHIM with all of your heart; to use your life to glorify His name.

PRAYER:

Father GOD... You alone are ELOHIM, the mighty Creator of all things.

Reality begins and ends with You.

From everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

Nothing shapes You – You are the One who shapes everything!

Including us.

Teach us to find our identity in You,

to make Your glory the purpose of our lives.

to know You and worship You with all our hearts...