

God

The word God itself actually tells us very little about God. Its root idea and etymology are disputed. Its meaning is generic. Its use is not limited to Scripture, or even as a reference to the one true God. Theologians rarely treat the word itself, but usually apply various teachings of Scripture overall to the divine being, and then often using so many Latin and philosophical terms that the fascinating, warm, and instructive use of the word God in Scripture is lost. The danger is that the triune, true, and living God to whom it alone belongs becomes distant, cold, and abstract.

The word God appears over 4,400 times in Scripture, second only to LORD as the most frequent noun. Strictly speaking, God is not a title or proper name, but an appellative or categorical term for divine being, more akin to the words man or spirit than Jesus or Jehovah. This explains why Scripture speaks of the name of God, not the name God; and why prayers are rarely addressed using only that term (although of note is that almost all exceptions such as, O God, are in books II and III of the Psalms, usually when the character of God is being denied, appealed to, or praised).

The Greek for God is *theos* (origin of the word theology) and is used both with and without the definite article 'the' (usually omitted in the KJV). The Hebrew word is *el*, often combined with titles, names, or attributes such as God Almighty (*El Shaddai*), God Most High (*El Elyon*), and most frequently, LORD God (*Jehovah El*). It is also used in common names such as Ezeki-el (*Strong is God*), El-ijah (*Jehovah is God*), Beth-el (*house of God*), and Isra-el (*Fighter of God*).

Although the word God by itself says very little, its contextual use in Scripture is rich. Generally, it denotes the absolute difference between the one, true God and everything else, particularly man and the gods that man makes. But this is not done mainly, as we might expect, by association with various incommunicable qualities of God, say by referring to the almighty (Gen. 17:1), eternal (Deut. 33:27), or everlasting God (Gen. 21:33). Rather, the featured and glorious use of the word God in Scrip-

ture is primarily relational, i.e., it reveals the uniqueness of the living God through His persons, perfections, works, and attitudes in relationship to the creation and His chosen people in the covenant of grace through Jesus Christ. Several examples make this plain.

First, it is specifically God who creates, upholds, and governs heaven and earth. He creates man living in His image (Gen. 1:26-27). Man dies and creates dumb images of god in heaven and earth (Rom. 1:25; Is. 44:18). This living God not only speaks, but sees, calls, commands, moves, makes, forms, causes, sets, divides, blesses, gives, ends, breathes, plants, puts, takes, brings, ends, and rests—all this in only the first six days with regard to man and creation.

Secondly, God is the God of someone, more so than the God of something, like heaven or earth (Gen. 24:3). He is God of hosts (Ps. 80:7). He is the God of people: Of our fathers (Acts 22:14), of families (Jer. 31:1), of holy prophets (Rev. 22:6), and of Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 3:29). He is God of specific persons: My God (John 20:28), our God (Mark 12:29), your God (Deut. 5:32), God of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7), God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 3:6), God of David (Is. 38:5), and most commonly, God of Israel (literally, God of the Fighter of God).

Thirdly, the perfections of God most commonly associated with God are those He shares with us and exercises on our behalf. He is the God of truth (Deut. 32:4), of knowledge (I Sam. 2:3), of glory (Ps. 29:3), of salvation (Ps. 68:20), of judgment (Is. 30:18), of patience (Rom. 15:5), of hope (Rom. 15:13), of peace (Rom. 15:33), of comfort (II Cor. 1:3), of love (II Cor. 13:11), and of all grace (I Pet. 5:10). Furthermore, He is this for us personally—He is God of my salvation (Ps. 18:46), my righteousness (Ps. 4:1), my life (Ps. 42:8), my strength (Ps. 43:2), my mercy (Ps. 59:10), and my praise (Ps. 109:1).

What blessedness then it is to be called the children of God (Matt. 5:9), to walk with God (Micah 6:8), and to live with God (I Cor. 7:24). He is not the God of the dead, but God of the living (Luke 20:38). And His great covenant promise is "I will be your God; you will be my people" (Jer. 30:22). This God is our God for ever and ever, who will be our guide even unto death (Ps. 48:14). 

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