December 2024

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WHO WAS YHVH IN THE O.T.?

In the Hebrew text of the Old Testament a number of different names are used to refer to God. One set of Hebrew names includes the singular "**Eloah**", the plural "**Elohim**" and the shortened form "**El**". Then there is also the name "**Adonai**". But the most frequently used name in the Old Testament is "**YHVH**".

In our English KJV the names El, Eloah and Elohim are commonly translated as "God", Adonai is translated as "Lord" and YHVH is translated as capitalized "LORD". Now when we want to establish the identity of YHVH, then the only possible two options are either God the Father, or Jesus Christ.

So **how** can we establish whether YHVH in the Old Testament refers to God the Father, or whether it refers to Jesus Christ?

The logical course of action is to examine the word YHVH, to establish what this name means, to identify all the individuals to whom that meaning actually applies at least potentially, and to look at the contexts in which this name is used. In other words, **we establish who YHVH is by examining the Scriptures which use the name YHVH**. We don't need to examine any other names or titles of God in order to determine who YHVH is. The Scriptures that use the name YHVH are sufficient to tell us whether those Scriptures are speaking about God the Father, or whether they are speaking about Jesus Christ.

Other names or titles for God have nothing to do with establishing the identity of YHVH. If none of those other names or titles were ever used in the Old Testament, it would still be an easy process to establish the identity of YHVH, based solely on the verses that use the name YHVH. Other names or titles for God don't affect the identity of YHVH. If we want to know who YHVH is, then we simply look at verses that use the name YHVH.

But there are people who don't like this approach towards establishing the identity of YHVH. Why don't they like this approach? They don't like it because they don't like **the unavoidable conclusion** that is reached when we use this approach.

Therefore they adopt **another course of action**. That course of action relies on **an indirect approach** to determine the identity for YHVH. For such people the meaning of the name YHVH itself is really immaterial. In fact, they don't even like looking at many of the places where the name YHVH is actually used. Instead, they focus on Scriptures that **don't use** the name YHVH at all. They look at Scriptures that use expressions like "the God of (y)our fathers" and "the Most High God". And from such references **they then reason back to the name YHVH**. And then they attempt to reach a different conclusion for the identity of YHVH, from the conclusion that is reached when we examine the word YHVH itself, and the specific contexts in which this name is used.

So why or how are such people able to reach a different conclusion, when compared to using the approach of examining the contexts in which the name YHVH is used? The answer lies in **the reasoning they use**. Reasoning commonly involves reliance on **certain assumptions**. Those assumptions they feel they don't have to prove; they simply take them for granted. But in some cases assumptions may be correct in one context but not in another. So we need to be on the lookout for assumptions which may be correct in some circumstances, being applied to circumstances in which those assumptions are not correct.

Regarding determining the identity of YHVH:

It should always raise a red flag when people seek to establish who YHVH is by totally avoiding the contexts in which the name YHVH is used, and avoiding the actual meaning of the Hebrew word YHVH; and they then instead rely on reasoning from other expressions and verses that don't involve the name YHVH. **Why do they avoid verses** which show YHVH in certain specific circumstances, circumstances that force a specific conclusion on us?

Using other verses that don't actually mention YHVH, and using other names and titles for God as supporting evidence is great ... **provided that** the identity of YHVH has **already** been established by the primary evidence. But the indirect approach cannot be the primary evidence! The primary evidence for establishing the identity for YHVH must be an examination of Scriptures that actually use the name YHVH. Why? Because **this approach eliminates the need for reasoning from assumed premises**. It restricts all reasoning to reliance on established facts.

"**Established facts**" include amongst others the following two things:

1) Both the Old Testament and the New Testament use the expression "**the day of the Lord**" to refer to the time when Jesus Christ returns to this earth. This expression "the day of the Lord" is never used to refer to God the Father coming to this present earth.

2) The God who will be on earth **during the millennium** is Jesus Christ. God the Father will not be on earth during the millennial rule of Jesus Christ.

No amount of reasoning from any Scriptures can do away with these two basic facts. They are both as clearly and as firmly established as the fact that the Sabbath day goes from Friday evening sunset to Saturday evening sunset.

Now it cannot be that an identity for YHVH, which is reached by reasoning from other names or titles of God, somehow contradicts the identity for YHVH that is clearly established from verses that actually use the name YHVH.

Let's consider a basic question:

WHAT IS A NAME?

Webster's Dictionary tells us that "a name" is "**a word constituting the distinctive designation of a person or thing**". Our "names" identify us and also distinguish us from other people, not by any attributes we have, but simply by our names being assigned to us, independent of any attributes.

In an attempt to establish a unique identity we commonly employ a combination of two or more names. That's because one name alone is not unique to any one person. So we have first names and last names, and possibly one or more middle names as well.

Now no first names are unique. There are thousands, or even millions of people, who share first names like John, Mary, James, Susan, Peter, Paul, etc. So a first name is not enough to accurately identify one specific person.

But last names, also called family names or surnames, are also not unique to one specific person. They are shared by all members of that family. People with the same last name have something in common ... they are members of the same family. And on top of this many different families actually have the same last name as other families.

Originally all names had specific meanings in the languages in which the names were used. So we have English names and French names and Spanish names and German names, etc. And in our world those names are fixed. Names are not translated into another language when people move to other countries.

So an Englishman named John Smith is still John Smith when he moves to live in Germany. His name doesn't suddenly become Johann Schmidt, which is the accurate translation of John Smith into German. In our world names are never translated, because the actual meanings of names are unimportant to us. To us names are simply tags, or sound bites to identify specific individuals. And if those sound bites also happen to have lofty meanings, then that is just a bonus. But the lofty meaning is not really important to us.

So let's note the following:

While the name "John Smith" has a very specific meaning in English (the meaning of John originally comes from the Hebrew language, that meaning being "God has graced"), that name has no meaning whatsoever in German or in Greek or in Chinese. In all languages, other than English, pronouncing the words "John Smith" is a meaningless sound bite. When a Russian hears the words "John Smith" pronounced, those sounds have no meaning in Russian.

It is the sound bite of "John Smith" that identifies John to people in China or Russia or France. To non-English speakers the words "John Smith" are only an identity tag for a specific man, but without those two words having any specific meaning.

That's how names function in our world. But how about God? How do names function in God's existence?

For a start, with God a name is never, under any circumstances, just a sound bite! With God every name has a very specific meaning. And with God it is that meaning that is important. Whatever language people may be speaking, it is **the meaning** of that name for God that **must be conveyed** to those people. The phonetic sound of any of God's names is very much secondary.

Arguing about how to correctly pronounce any of God's names is rank stupidity. Why? Because an emphasis on "correct" pronunciation reduces God's names to specific sound bites. And God's names are not to be reduced to meaningless sound bites. The meaning of each name is important; the actual phonetic sound is only secondary.

People can take God's name in vain, whether they pronounce it correctly or not, in whatever language they may be speaking. If in their minds the words they are using are intended to refer to either God the Father or to Jesus Christ, then they could be in danger of taking God's name in vain.

In Hebrew the names El, Eloah, Elohim, YHVH, etc. all have very specific meanings. But to all of us who don't speak or understand Hebrew, those words are only sound bites. So if we want to use those sound bites in speaking about God, then we need to have **a very clear meaning** in our own minds for each of those sound bites.

Thus the singular word "**Eloah**" literally means "**a Mighty One**". And the plural "**Elohim**" thus means "Mighty Ones", with the understanding that there are other individuals who are also "Mighty Ones", in addition to the individual who is referred to in a specific verse. In other words, the plural "Elohim" reveals that more than one individual owns the title or name "Elohim". It is somewhat like the family name for the Family of God; it will be the Family of the Elohim. The name "**El**" is a shortened form for the singular "Eloah", and El also means "a Mighty One". All three words are typically translated as "God", and that's fine.

Then we come to a problem.

Adonai and YHVH are both translated as "Lord", though one is always presented in capital letters. Now while it helps to differentiate between two names by writing either "Lord" or "LORD", this obscures the actual meaning of the two Hebrew words involved. In English the meaning of the word "lord" is always the same, whether we write "Lord" or "LORD". Using either capitals or small letters **doesn't change the meaning** of our English word "lord"; it only changes **to whom** this word is applied in certain Bible translations.

However, the Hebrew words Adonai and YHVH do not mean the same thing. They have different meanings. And **these differences are lost** when both these names are translated as "Lord".

The Hebrew name **Adonai** comes from a word that means "to rule". The actual meaning of Adonai is (my) ruler, master, owner. And that meaning is correctly conveyed by our English word "(my) **Lord**".

But the Hebrew name **YHVH** does not mean “LORD”. The name YHVH really means “always existing, the Ever-Living One”. And so the actual meaning of YHVH is best expressed in English as “**the Eternal**”. The word “LORD” is not a correct translation for YHVH, because YHVH really focuses on existence, and not on ownership or rulership.

Now let’s consider one specific expression that is used for God.

THE MOST HIGH GOD

Let’s look at the expression “the most high God”. I am not examining this expression because it has any influence on the identity of YHVH. It doesn’t affect determining the identity of YHVH at all. But there are those people who use this expression to reach the wrong conclusion that YHVH must always refer to God the Father. So for such people I include here an examination of the expression “the most high God”.

The English expression “the most high God” appears **eight times** in the Old Testament. And the English expression “God most high” appears **one time**.

In the account of Melchizedek meeting Abram (i.e. before God changed his name to Abraham) this expression is used four times, in Genesis 14:18,19, 20,22. In each case the Hebrew words translated as “the most high God” are “**El elyon**”.

[Comment: In Hebrew adjectives typically follow the nouns they describe, whereas in English we write the adjectives before the noun.]

In Psalm 78:56 the Hebrew expression is “**Elohim elyon**”.

The last three occurrences are not in Hebrew but in Aramaic. They are in the Book of Daniel, Daniel 3:26, Daniel 5:18 and Daniel 5:21. The relevant Aramaic words used in these three verses are the equivalent of the Hebrew words “**Eloah elyon**”.

The one place where the English translation is “God most high” is Psalm 57:2. There the Hebrew reads “**Elohim elyon**”.

So this expression “the most high God” consists of one word for “God” (i.e. El or Eloah or Elohim) plus the adjective translated “**most high**” (i.e. elyon).

But translating “elyon” as “most high” is **a misleading translation**. Here is why.

Regarding the comparative and superlative states, here is what we have: while the comparative state can apply to many individuals, the superlative state is always **restricted to one individual**. Thus: many individuals can be “higher” than a certain group, but only one can be “the highest”.

The problem with the translation “the most high God” is that it presents this name in the form of **a comparison**, in which comparison **only one can possibly be “the highest”** (or “the most high”). This translation makes no provision for anyone else to also be “the most high”. You can’t have two Beings who are both “the most high”.

But such a comparison is not what the Hebrew text refers to. The Hebrew adjective **elyon is not a superlative**! This word is used 53 times in the Old Testament, of which many uses do not refer to God. Here is how elyon is translated in the KJV:

most high = 9

highest = 2

Highest = 1

uppermost = 1

above = 1

Roughly one quarter of the occurrences of “elyon” are translated with the superlative case (i.e. most high, highest, Highest, uppermost), while three quarters of all occurrences are translated without the use of the superlative. The superlative meaning “most” is **only inferred** in certain places where this Hebrew word is used, but the superlative is not a part of the actual meaning of “elyon”.

The point is that the Hebrew text for the expression “the most high God” does not really contain a word or an indication for “most”! (Shortly we’ll look at the NT Greek text for this expression.) The Hebrew expression “**El elyon**” really means “**the high God**”.

Now can “the high God” also be “the most high God”? Yes, certainly. But does it have to be “the most high God”? No, in Hebrew the word “most” is not a part of this expression. The most important aspect for establishing the identity of the God who is being spoken about is always **the context** in which this word “elyon” is used.

It is **the context** in Genesis 14, which states that Melchizedek was “the priest of the most high God”, that makes clear that here the expression “El elyon” must refer to **God the Father**.

And in Psalm 78:56 it is **the context** that makes clear that here “El elyon” refers to **Jesus Christ**. Keep

in mind that “most” is not a part of the Hebrew text.

And in Psalm 57:2 it is the context that again identifies Jesus Christ as “Elohim elyon”. Let’s look at this verse.

I will cry unto God (**Elohim**) most high (**elyon**); unto God (**El**) who performs *all things* for me. (Psalms 57:2)

The One to whom David cried out, the One who “performed all things” for David, i.e. who answered David’s prayers, was the One to whom David referred as “**my Lord**” a few psalms later (in Psalm 110:1). And the context in Psalm 110:1 makes clear that David’s “Lord” was Jesus Christ.

We might also look at one other place where the words for “God” and for “the most high” are used individually in the same context; i.e. they don’t form one expression, but they are separated by several other Hebrew words between the words for “God” and “most high”. And that is the account with **the pagan priest Balaam**.

You’re familiar with the general circumstances, right? After Balaam had blessed Israel instead of cursing them, Balak was highly upset. And then Balaam, speaking about himself, said to Balak:

He (i.e. Balaam himself) has said, which **heard the words** of God (**El**), and knew **the knowledge** of the most High (**elyon**), *which* saw the vision of the Almighty (**Shaddai**), falling *into a trance*, but having his eyes open: (Numbers 24:16)

In verse 1 Balaam is shown to have had contact with YHVH.

And when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD (**YHVH**) to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness. (Numbers 24:1)

Numbers 24:1 was written by Moses. And it was Moses who in verse 1 identified the God who was dealing with Balaam as YHVH. Balaam himself then in verse 16 refers to **YHVH** as “**El**” and as “**elyon**” and as “**Shaddai**”.

But it was only one God who was dealing with Balaam, not two different Gods. So all these words “YHVH, El, elyon, Shaddai” refer to one and the same God who was dealing with Balaam.

Now there is absolutely no way that God the Father would have gotten involved with the pagan priest Balaam!

When Jesus Christ told the Jews in John 5:37 that they had never at any time “heard the voice” of God the Father, then this was even more true for the pagan priest Balaam. But **Balaam** said that he **had**

heard the words of the God who was dealing with him. And the God who was dealing with Balaam was **the God of Israel**.

This again makes clear that the YHVH who dealt with Balaam was Jesus Christ. God the Father has never dealt with pagans! This event also makes clear that “El elyon” also refers to Jesus Christ. The word “most” should not be used when translating “elyon” ... unless it is already clear that this is a reference to God the Father.

Once we correct the mistranslation “the most high God” to read “the high God”, then different contexts in the Old Testament show that “El elyon” is used for both God the Father and Jesus Christ.

I have discussed this expression “El elyon” at some length because some people draw the unjustified conclusion that “El elyon” can only apply to one individual. They are reasoning from an English grammar point of view, as applied to the word “most” in this expression. But there is no justification in the Hebrew text to demand that the word “most” should be a part of the translation. And the application of this Hebrew expression “El elyon” is not restricted to only one individual.

“THE MOST HIGH GOD” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

This expression is also used three times in the New Testament. Those three places are Mark 5:7, Acts 16:17 and Hebrews 7:1. In each case the Greek expression is “tou theou tou hupsistou”, and “**the Most High God**” **is a correct translation**. Let’s take a look at all three verses.

And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with You, **Jesus, *You* Son of the most high God**? I adjure You by God, that You torment me not. (Mark 5:7)

This statement was **made by a demon**, who had possessed the unfortunate man in this incident. Demons aren’t exactly renowned for speaking the truth. But demons have always been aware of the existence of God the Father. So it is no surprise that demons recognize that God the Father is “the most high God”. And the demon’s statement here is correct.

The context shows that **here** this expression is used by the demon in reference to God the Father. And when this expression is used to refer to God the Father, then it is certainly appropriate to refer to the Father as “the most high God”. Note that this situation here does not involve any quotation from or application to the Old Testament. It is a demon who uses this expression.

But this occasion here does not preclude the expression “the high God” in the Old Testament Hebrew text from referring to Jesus Christ.

Let’s look at the next verse.

The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the **servants of the most high God**, which show unto us the way of salvation. (Acts 16:17)

This statement was **also made by a demon**, in this case a young woman who was demon-possessed. The demon was trying to embarrass Paul and the men with Paul.

Now all of God's servants in New Testament times are servants of God the Father. So here we have a demon, trying to embarrass Paul by drawing attention to him and his companions, by making a statement that happened to be correct. **The context** here shows that this is again a reference to God the Father. Therefore the word "most" is certainly acceptable. It is in fact a correct translation of the Greek text. Again though, this does not involve any quotation from or reference to the Old Testament. The statement is nothing more than a demon trying to embarrass Paul.

Let's look at the third and last verse with this expression.

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, **priest of the most high God**, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; (Hebrews 7:1)

While this is not a direct quotation, it is a reference to Genesis 14:18. The context here speaks about Melchizedek, who was Jesus Christ before His human birth. In this epistle Paul was trying to explain Jesus Christ's role in the Old Testament to the Jews in the Church. That is the context.

At the time of Abraham Jesus Christ was the priest of God the Father, ready **to represent Abraham before the throne of God the Father**. So here it is also very appropriate to refer to God the Father as "the Most High God". The context once again justifies this conclusion. And that is exactly what the Greek text literally means.

So here is what we have.

In the **Old Testament Hebrew** we have the expression "El elyon", which means "the high God". Now **if** the context makes clear (as in Genesis 14) that this is a reference to God the Father, **then** it is certainly acceptable to render this Hebrew expression as "the most high God". However, the Hebrew text itself does not indicate that the word "most" should be a part of the meaning of this two-word expression.

Thus our understanding of the context for every place where this expression "El elyon" and its other equivalent expressions are used will determine whether in each specific place it should be rendered "the high God", in reference to Jesus Christ, or whether it is acceptable to add the word "most", and therefore to translate it as "the most high God", in reference to God the Father.

In the **New Testament Greek** we have the expression "tou theou tou hupsistou", which only has one possible meaning, that meaning being "the most high God". There is no ambiguity in this expression. Therefore this restricts this expression to God the Father. And the context in all three occurrences does

indeed show that it is a reference to God the Father in each case. But the only reference to the Old Testament amongst these three verses is to the occasion which involved Melchizedek, the occasion that also refers to God the Father.

So in the Old Testament El elyon is used to refer both to God the Father and also to Jesus Christ. In the New Testament we only have the superlative expression “tou theou tou hupsistou” and that is only used to refer to God the Father. And references to God the Father are certainly references to “the most high God”.

We cannot draw any conclusions from any New Testament references applying to any Old Testament situations, which did not involve Jesus Christ in the role of Melchizedek. The correct identity in each case in the Old Testament has to be determined from each context. The context in the three NT verses makes clear that it refers to God the Father in each case. And the Greek text used in those verses has the only meaning of “the most high God”, without any ambiguity.

So:

While in our English translations we see the identical expressions “the most high God” in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, the respective Hebrew and Greek expressions do not have the identical meaning. New Testament Greek **“tou theou tou hupsistou” does not have the exact same meaning as “El elyon”** in Old Testament Hebrew.

The Greek expression includes the superlative state, and therefore it refers only to God the Father. But the Hebrew expression does not contain the superlative, and therefore it does not restrict its application to God the Father. The Hebrew expression really means “the high God”, and when it is clearly used to refer to God the Father, then we have the latitude to render it as “the most high God”. But translating this Hebrew expression as “the most high God”, without regard for any context, is a mistake made by the translators in a few OT verses. Strictly speaking the rendering “the most high God” is an interpretation, not a translation, because of arbitrarily adding the word “most” to the translation.

So we need to be on guard when attempts are made to reason from the New Testament Greek expression back to the Old Testament Hebrew expression, because those two expressions are not really identical in meaning.

WHEN A NAME IS CHANGED

As already stated, in biblical times every name originally had a meaning. And we see that in some cases God changed a person’s name. For example, God changed the name Abram to Abraham, the name Sarai to Sarah, and the name Jacob to Israel. What was the purpose for those changes in names?

When God changed a person’s name, then that was **an announcement about a change in destiny for that person**! A new name means a new destiny in the sight of God.

When you think about it, that principle even applies to marriage. When a wife accepts the last name of her husband, then she is showing that her destiny is now linked to the life of her husband, rather than to the lives of her own parents. Upon entering into marriage she has accepted a new destiny for her life here on earth. And so she accepts a new last name.

Now from a biblical point of view, in some cases **new names are added** to someone, without the already established name or names being taken away from that individual. This will be the case for all those who will be in the first resurrection; they will receive multiple names.

So we are told that those in the first resurrection will receive "**a new name**" (Revelation 2:17). This new name will very likely be the replacement for our current names. In addition, those in the first resurrection will also receive "**the name of My God**" (Revelation 3:12), which may be a reference to receiving the name "Elohim". "The name of My God" will identify them as members of God's Family. This is also referred to as "having the Father's name written in their foreheads" (Revelation 14:1, see also Revelation 22:4). And then they also receive **Jesus Christ's "new name"** (also verse 12).

In addition, those same individuals will also receive the name "**New Jerusalem**". Think about this name. It illustrates the very different purposes that names fulfill in God's existence, when compared to how we use names today.

It's not that human beings during the millennium will say something like "if you have some spare time, New Jerusalem, I'd really like to seek your advice on something that is of concern to me", where "New Jerusalem" is the name of the spirit being they are addressing. No, the name "New Jerusalem" is not a name that any individual will ever be called in the millennium or thereafter.

The only purpose for the name "New Jerusalem" for all those in the first resurrection is to identify **their destiny** to always be **permanent citizens** in the New Jerusalem, whereas all the other individuals in God's Family (i.e. those from the millennium and from the Second Resurrection period) will only come to the New Jerusalem as visitors, but not as permanent residents.

We see one other interesting thing here, regarding how God uses names. These names don't apply uniquely to one individual. No, these names that are mentioned here in the Book of Revelation are common to all those who will be in the first resurrection. So there will be 144000 individuals who will have the name "New Jerusalem" and also have "the Father's name" written in their foreheads, and they will also have Jesus Christ's "new name". And that is in addition to having another "new name".

Here is the point:

1) Each name has a very specific meaning.

2) All those individuals to whom that specific meaning applies, who meet the criteria to which that name refers, will be given that name.

3) Individuals who do not meet the criteria entailed in a specific name will not receive that name.

4) So names are used to identify attributes, character traits, status and position in the presence of God.

5) Names will not be just sound bites with lofty meanings, which don't have any connection to reality.

6) Rather, names will identify a number of different aspects that apply to the bearers of those names.

7) Where more than one individual share the same attributes or status or position in God's presence, **those individuals will also share one or more names**.

Consider the following:

God the Father shares His name with all those in the first resurrection. And Jesus Christ shares His "new name" with all those in the first resurrection. So when God the Father and Jesus Christ so readily share Their names with all those human beings who will comprise the first resurrection, **what about God the Father and Jesus Christ also sharing Their names with One Another?**

When God the Father invites Jesus Christ to also sit with the Father on the Father's throne (see Revelation 3:21), then this shows that God the Father shares ruling over His creation with Jesus Christ. Sitting on a throne refers to rulership. This statement in Revelation 3:21 is the ultimate instance of sharing.

God the Father and Jesus Christ share all those names that reflect attributes that apply to both of Them. Thus:

1) Both are God. Both of Them are "**Mighty Ones**". Therefore the names El, Eloah and Elohim can apply to Both of Them.

2) Both of them are "**a high God**", or El elyon in Hebrew, although only God the Father is "the God most high". So Both of Them are "El elyon", but only God the Father is "tou theou tou hupsistou".

3) Both of Them have existed together for all past eternity. Neither God the Father nor Jesus Christ had a beginning. Both of Them are eternal. Therefore the name "**the Eternal**", or YHVH in Hebrew, also applies to Both of Them. Since Both of Them are indeed eternal, therefore it is impossible for the name "the Eternal" to not also be shared by Both of Them. This name YHVH expresses an attribute that is possessed by Both of Them, and by no other being.

A CONSEQUENCE IF CHRIST IS NOT ALSO YHVH

The importance of the meanings that all of God's names have cannot be overstated! **There are consequences** for every name that applies to God, even as there are consequences to every new name that God gives to people in the first resurrection. With God no name is ever just a sound bite.

As far as Jesus Christ is concerned:

If the name YHVH does not apply to Jesus Christ, then the automatic consequence is that Jesus Christ has not always existed with God the Father. If the name YHVH does not apply to Jesus Christ, then it automatically means that **at some point God the Father had to create Jesus Christ**. That is the unavoidable consequence of not having the name YHVH. That is because the name YHVH means "**One who has always existed**".

So:

To accept that Jesus Christ has always existed with God the Father, but **to deny** that the name YHVH also applies to Jesus Christ is a discordant statement. It presents **a conflict**. Or in the words of the old song: "**you can't have one without the other**".

You cannot have a Being who has always existed, but for some reason that Being is not allowed to be known as "One who has always existed".

That name YHVH **cannot apply** to any individual who has not always existed, and it **cannot be denied** to any Individual who has always existed.

I point this out because there are **two different opinions** amongst the people who deny that the name YHVH also applies to Jesus Christ. There are those people who claim that God the Father created Jesus Christ, and there are other people who accept that Jesus Christ has always existed with God the Father.

Thus:

1) For those people who claim that God the Father at some point created Jesus Christ: for those people it is absolutely **essential to deny** that the name YHVH also applies to Jesus Christ. They obviously cannot accept that the name "One who has always existed" also applies to Jesus Christ. So such people must deny that YHVH also applies to Jesus Christ. In so doing, they are consistent in their position. But then their issue is not just the name YHVH; their real issue is the eternal existence of Jesus Christ.

2) For other people who accept that Jesus Christ has always existed together with God the Father, but who deny that the name YHVH also applies to Jesus Christ: for those people it is **an oxymoron** to deny that the name YHVH also applies to Jesus Christ. Their problem is that they view the name YHVH as a sound bite without any specific meaning. So they are trying to withhold the name "One who has always existed" from someone they acknowledge "has always existed". They are the people who "can't have

one without the other".

The people in this second group don't realize that **they have** in fact **taken the first step** towards denying that Jesus Christ has always existed with God the Father. That progression is inevitable. In fact, denying that the name YHVH also applies to Jesus Christ is a prerequisite for believing that God the Father created Jesus Christ. Denying that the name YHVH also applies to Jesus Christ is an intermediate step towards denying that Jesus Christ has always existed.

So we should not let claims regarding to whom the name YHVH applies obscure the real underlying issue: **do we accept or deny that Jesus Christ has always existed?**

where "God of our fathers" is used in the N.T. are all in the Book of Acts, written by Luke. None of the other writers of the books of the N.T. ever used this expression.

From Exodus 6:3 we know that El Shaddai was the God who dealt with "the fathers". Therefore El Shaddai was the God of (y)our fathers. We also know that El Shaddai also identified Himself as YHVH. When we then consider John 5:37, we have to conclude that the YHVH who dealt with the fathers was Jesus Christ, since John 5:37 precludes God the Father from having dealt with the fathers.

But that presents a challenge, when we consider the three statements in the New Testament, which mention the God of our fathers. Here are those three verses.

The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, **the God of our fathers, has glorified His Son Jesus**; whom you delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *Him* go. (Acts 3:13)

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew and hanged on a tree. (Acts 5:30)

And he said, **The God of our fathers has chosen you**, that you should know His will, and see that Just One, and should hear the voice of His mouth. (Acts 22:14)

In all three verses **here** in the Book of Acts the expression **"the God of our fathers" refers to God the Father**, and not to Jesus Christ.

Question: So does this affect the identity of YHVH in the Old Testament?

Answer: No, not at all.

From an examination of the use of the name **YHVH** in the O.T. it is clear that this name **is applied both to** God the Father and to Jesus Christ. And these three statements in the Book of Acts don't change

anything in this regard.

[Comment: The main O.T. Scripture, that establishes that YHVH at times also refers to God the Father is Psalm 110:1.]

Notice something Jesus Christ said about Abraham.

Your father Abraham rejoiced **to see My day**: and he saw *it*, and was glad. (John 8:56)

In this verse Jesus Christ is saying that He had dealt with Abraham, that **He had seen Abraham**. The Jews very clearly understood this meaning. Therefore they responded somewhat angrily:

Then said the Jews unto Him, You are not yet fifty years old, and **have You seen Abraham**? (John 8:57)

Jesus Christ in effect answered their question with: yes, I have been around a lot longer than the time of Abraham.

But notice from verse 56 that Abraham “rejoiced” when Jesus Christ was dealing with him. In this verse Jesus Christ is making the point that **He was the One who dealt with Abraham**. And that means that Jesus Christ really was “the God of Abraham”, and therefore also “the God of our fathers”.

So here is the situation:

In the **Old Testament** the expression “God of (y)our fathers” is used to refer primarily to **Jesus Christ**. And in the **New Testament** the expression “God of our fathers” is used to refer exclusively to **God the Father**.

So how does that work? And who is really the God of our fathers ... God the Father or Jesus Christ? Or **are They both the God of our fathers**?

Let’s consider the context for the three N.T. references.

Luke wrote the Book of Acts close to **30 years after Jesus Christ’s ministry**. At the time of Luke writing this book, Jesus Christ was already sitting at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. Jesus Christ had opened the way for human beings to have access to God the Father, by repentant people directly approaching God the Father “in the name of Jesus Christ”. We need to understand that **the only way** any human being can approach God the Father is by approaching the Father “**in the name of Jesus Christ**”. At this point in time there is no other access to God the Father.

Jesus Christ had opened up a great deal of understanding about God the Father and God's plan of salvation for mankind. To all the members of God's New Testament Church the position of God the Father within God's overall plan was so much clearer than the understanding that had been available during Old Testament times. Jesus Christ very specifically focused the attention of true Christians on God the Father. Jesus Christ had repeatedly emphasized the supreme position of God the Father.

Therefore all the writers of the books of the New Testament made sure to always convey the Father's supreme position. Jesus Christ instructed us to direct our prayers to God the Father, and to do so "in the name of Jesus Christ".

Notice how Jesus Christ instructed us to **not** pray to Him, but to always pray to the Father.

And **in that day you shall ask Me nothing**. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever you shall ask the Father **in My name**, He will give *it* you. (John 16:23)

The expression "you shall ask Me nothing" means "in that day **you are not to pray to Me**". No, you are to pray to the Father.

Now let's understand the procedure that Jesus Christ laid out.

No man can come to Me, except the Father who has sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:44)

And He said, Therefore said I unto you, that **no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father**. (John 6:65)

Since the time of Noah **God the Father** is the One who selects people for an opportunity to salvation in the first resurrection. It is God the Father who selects the members of the Government Jesus Christ will establish during the millennium.

Jesus Christ referred to this group of people as "**those whom You have given to Me**" (John 17:11). Once God the Father has selected specific people, then Jesus Christ works with them, to lead them to salvation. They have been "given" to Christ.

Now these statements in John 6:45,65 and in John 17:11 don't just apply to the time of the New Testament. They apply to **God the Father choosing every single individual** since the time of Noah, for an opportunity to be a part of the first resurrection. (Before the time of the flood nobody received a special "calling" in order to "walk with God". Before the flood every single human being had the opportunity to "walk with God", but it seems like none, except for Abel, Enoch and Noah, availed themselves of that opportunity.)

So God the Father selected Abraham for the opportunity to become the father of the faithful, and then Jesus Christ was the One who actually worked with Abraham. That's why Jesus Christ was Melchizedek in the days of Abraham, to represent Abraham before the throne of God the Father. And that is the same responsibility Jesus Christ is fulfilling right now for all of God's people who are scattered around the world, representing us before the throne of God the Father.

Notice also Psalm 110.

The LORD (**YHVH**) **said unto** my Lord (**Adonai**), Sit You at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool. (Psalms 110:1)

In this verse David refers to God the Father as YHVH, and to Jesus Christ as Adonai. David clearly recognized that the One he called YHVH was in authority over the One David called Adonai. But here is the point:

David did not refer to God the Father as "my Lord". No, David referred to Jesus Christ as "**my** Lord". **Why**? Why did David acknowledge Jesus Christ as his Lord?

While David recognized that there was a God higher in authority than Jesus Christ, David also recognized that **Jesus Christ was the One with whom he, David, had contact**. Jesus Christ was David's Lord (Adonai) because **David had to give account to Jesus Christ for all his actions**. And that made Jesus Christ David's Lord. And Jesus Christ in turn was David's intercessor before the Father's throne.

So Psalm 110:1 shows that Jesus Christ was the God who dealt with David. But David was also aware that there was a God who was greater than Jesus Christ.

So here is the point for us regarding the expression "God of our fathers":

Jesus Christ was "the God of our fathers" because He was the One who interacted with the fathers, leading them towards salvation. He was the One who actually worked with those men.

But God the Father was also "the God of our fathers" because He was the One who selected Abraham for an opportunity to become the father of the faithful. And Jesus Christ was all along carrying out the plan and the will of God the Father. While not directly interacting with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God the Father was nevertheless the One in overall control, and the One who selected Jacob instead of Esau. God the Father, in His capacity as the Supreme Head of the Family of God, made the selections to call specific people.

And so with the greater understanding about God the Father's part, which understanding was made available by Jesus Christ during His ministry, it was **the Apostle Peter who first recognized** that God the Father had been involved in selecting the fathers for their opportunities, even though Jesus Christ was the One who had then worked with those men.

And so Peter acknowledged that God the Father was ultimately also “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers”, even though those men never had any direct contact with the Father. Peter expressed this understanding in Acts 3:13 and in Acts 5:30. The devout man Ananias had then learned this from Peter, and later Ananias repeated this information to Paul, who at that point had been blinded by Jesus Christ (see Acts 22:14).

So the designation “the God of our fathers” is one more title that God the Father and Jesus Christ share. They share this title because They were both involved with the fathers: God the Father doing the selecting of individuals, and Jesus Christ then actually working with the individuals “who had been given to Him”.

Notice Jesus Christ’s prayer before He suffered.

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, **keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me**, that they may be one, as We *are*. (John 17:11)

While here Jesus Christ was speaking about His apostles, God the Father had also “given” Abraham to Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. God the Father “had given” all of God’s Old Testament servants to Jesus Christ. That was the Father’s involvement in the process.

So it is the greater understanding of God’s whole plan that gives us the recognition, that the designation “the God of our fathers” applies not only to Jesus Christ, but also to God the Father.

To illustrate how often God the Father and Jesus Christ share a name or title, consider 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. (Isaiah 9:6)

This verse is speaking about Jesus Christ. The title “the Father” obviously belongs to God the Father. Yet here we are told that one of Jesus Christ’s names is “the everlasting Father”. So even the name “the Father” is shared by God the Father with Jesus Christ. And then God the Father brings Jesus Christ up to the Father’s own throne, indicating that God the Father also shares His rule with Jesus Christ.

God the Father and Jesus Christ share the names El, Eloah, Elohim, YHVH, the God of our fathers, the high God, and even the title “Father”. And They share ruling over all of God’s creation, though God the Father is always the unquestioned Leader. God the Father and Jesus Christ are indeed “one” in how They conduct their individual existences. As Jesus Christ said:

I and *My* Father are one. (John 10:30)

Oneness involves sharing with those with whom we are one. And the greatest sharing in any circumstances is the sharing between God the Father and Jesus Christ. They have co-existed for all past eternity without ever thinking selfishly. They have always cooperated. They have always trusted One Another absolutely. And They have always fully accepted that God the Father was, and would always be, the Leader in all circumstances.

It shouldn't be any surprise at all that God the Father and Jesus Christ share many names between Them, because They have so many things in common.

Let's keep in mind that with God **names are not just identity tags or sound bites**, as is the case with us human beings. With God any individual is not primarily identified by "the handle" that is attached to that individual. With God any individual is identified first of all by the character traits, the attributes, the positions given by God, and the powers and the abilities that each individual possesses, and the status that God has given to the individual. Only then comes "the handle", the sound bite we call "our name".

With God **we are identified** far more **by what we are** than by what our names happen to be.

As far as our original question is concerned: Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament, the God who worked with Abraham and the people of Israel. The word YHVH means "the Eternal, One who has always existed". The overwhelming majority of the more than 6500 places where the name YHVH is used in the Old Testament refer to Jesus Christ. But in a few places YHVH also refers to God the Father. In every case **the context is always the key** for determining the identity of YHVH.

Since both God the Father and Jesus Christ are eternal, i.e. They have no beginning, therefore the name "the Eternal" can readily apply to both of Them. YHVH is only one of a number of names that God the Father and Jesus Christ share.

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