

Knowing Him personally

by Tim Maurice

I have observed that many Christians never refer to the Lord as 'the Lord', but always as 'God'. On the surface, this seems unimportant. Why should it matter whether we call Him one or the other? Don't they mean the same thing?

As a matter of fact they don't mean the same thing. We can see the difference between the two names in a conversation between the Lord God and Moses. Here is part of that conversation:

Then Moses said to God, 'When I come to the people of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is His name?" what shall I say to them?' And God said to Moses, "I AM who I AM." And He said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." This is My name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.' Exo 3:13-15.

You will notice that Moses is talking to 'God', not 'the Lord'. The Hebrew word for 'God' is *Elohim*, and it was to Israel that God revealed that He was the true God (*Elohim*), the Maker

of heaven and earth, and the only God whom they should worship. Every other nation around Israel believed in many gods - gods of the sun, the moon, animals and so on. But the true God was revealed as being 'One'. And not only a singular God, but completely outside and beyond the created order.

This is a very important thing for all of us to know. We need to know that God made the world (including us) and that nothing in our lives can compete with Him - things that we might not call gods, but which, in fact, will take priority over everything else if we let them. We need to know that He is powerful and that the very breath we breathe is because He allows it to be so.

God has a name

We also need to know that this God became a man called Jesus and lived among us, and then died the death for all sin, creating a pathway for the birth of a new race of people called 'sons of God'. These are the most important things we can know. But we need to know more than that. We need to know the God who did these things. And God has a name.

This leads us back to the passage where God is talking to Moses. Read it again. You will see

that Moses says something like this: 'It's all well and good for me to go to the people of Israel and say that God has sent me. But what do I tell them when they ask me, "Who is He?" and "What is His name?" "What will I say to them?' Moses knows who God is; but he wants to know more than this. He wants to know God by name.

And so *Elohim* tells Moses His name: Yahweh. Yahweh means 'I am who I am'. It is really important to pause right here and see that God is engaging Moses in a personal, relational interaction. The God who made Moses could be called by name! Here was the God of all creation introducing Himself to Moses: 'You've heard about Me and seen what I've done. Now I'd like to introduce Myself to you.' And He didn't mean simply a formal, 'How do you do?' The Lord deeply desired that Moses would come to know Him as a friend. And this is what later happened. 'Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.' Exo 33:11.

Can we really know God this way? Well, not if you know Him only as your Creator and the one to whom you owe your allegiance. These things are true, but they can be bits of information that sit in our minds, like knowing how to find the circumference of a circle or what the capital of Australia is. Or, closer still, like knowing about historical characters.

There are people from history, or whose life stories we have heard, whom we feel we almost know. Almost, but not really at all. It can be like that with God. We can know so much about Him from the Bible or from going to church, that we almost know Him. But, deep down, we are aware that we don't really know Him. In fact we can't know Him unless we

meet Him. And here's the point: God wants to meet you as meaningfully as He met Moses! He wants you to know His name.

We can know the Lord

The reason we now have access to His name is because of Jesus. Jesus was Yahweh in the flesh. He also made it possible for us to receive Yahweh's life as a gift. This gift is our right to be 'partakers of the divine nature' or, in simple terms, sons of God. We can become joined to Christ and baptised into His name.

And the name of Jesus is 'the Lord'. To put it another way: the Lord revealed Himself to us as Jesus. He is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our God - the One whom we worship and whose sons we are - and He is also our Lord. John's Gospel famously contains seven 'I am' statements by Jesus. In making these statements Jesus deliberately identified Himself as Yahweh - the same Lord who revealed Himself to Moses. As He said to the Jews when they were questioning Him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.' Joh 8:58.

We become sons of God and are then 'called by the name of the Lord'. We are born of the life of God and given a place of belonging in His name. Being in His name identifies that we belong to Him. He puts the seal of His name upon us by the Holy Spirit.

So He is both God and Lord to us. When Thomas saw the resurrected Jesus for who He was, he said, 'My Lord and my God.' Jesus is our God and the Lord is His name. ■

