

The Discipleship Project-Summer 2017

Series 1: The Oneness of God

A series by Gerald McLean.

Series Big Idea: The Lord our God is one.

Lesson 1.2: The Covenant Name of God

Lesson Big Idea: Scripture proclaims that, in the New Covenant, the name of Jesus is the saving name of God.

FOUNDATION

Scripture Focus: Matthew 1:21 (PPT)

The Old Testament saints of Hebrews-chapter-11 fame were distinguished by their incredible faith in a God they barely knew. They were given fragments of truth in bits and pieces, but at no time was the truth of God's identity revealed to them in its entirety. Yet, the men and women of Hebrews 11 staggered not at the promises of God. They lived by faith as evidenced by their unwavering obedience to God's directives, even when they did not understand them.

Consider Abraham. God called Abraham out of idolatry. Abraham's father, Terah, was an idol maker. Abraham had been surrounded by idols all of his life. Can you imagine the surprise and likely indignation of Terah when his son told him he had heard from God? The conversation may have gone something like this. "Son, what is your god's name?" Abraham could only respond, "I do not know His name because He did not tell me His name." Then Terah probably asked, "Well, if you do not know His name, what does He look like?" Again, Abraham could only utter a feeble response, "I do not know what He looks like. He is invisible." We can imagine Terah exploding with, "So, are you going to follow after a no-name, invisible god? Have you gone mad?"

Abraham answered in the affirmative, as did the other faithful saints of Hebrews 11. They longed to know God's name and see His face. They longed for the mystery of God's identity to be revealed to them. But Hebrews 11:13 speaks with finality, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises" (KJV). The writer of Hebrews reiterates this message in verse 39, "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise" (KJV).

What promises did they not receive? They died without knowing the mystery name of God and without having seen Him face-to-face.

FRAME

God chose to reveal Himself primarily through His names and titles. (PPT) (PDG)
The opening verse of Scripture introduces us to God as the Creator. (See Genesis 1:1.) *Elohim* is the Hebrew word for God. Genesis 2:7 adds the word Lord to God when God creates man. Unlike God's other creative activities in Genesis 1—when God spoke things

into existence—“the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Genesis 2:7, KJV). Lord or Yahweh (Jehovah) then refers to God’s special relationship with man.

In Genesis 15:2, when addressing God, Abram used the title “Lord” as opposed to the “Lord” of Genesis 2:7. The Hebrew word for “Lord” in this case is *Adonai* and means “master.” Abram now had a revelation that God is our master.

Although Christians today understand that God is all-powerful, Abram had no such revelation until God introduced Himself as “Almighty God” (*El-Shaddai*) in Genesis 17:1.

When God revealed Himself to Abraham in Genesis 22:14 as *Jehovah-Jireh*, which literally means “the Lord will provide,” Abraham’s understanding of God was further expanded. It is one thing to know that God is almighty and can do anything, but it is an even greater revelation to understand that God will use that power on our behalf.

To Moses, God said He was “I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus 3:14) or the self-existent one. Isaiah knew God as Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14), the everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6), and the Savior (Isaiah 43:11).

By no means do these names and titles form an exhaustive list of the Old Testament names and titles for God. But, imagine the joy the Old Testament saints must have felt when they realized God was all of the above and so much more. He was also their healer and an ever-present help in time of need. Imagine their sense of security as they recognized God to be their banner, peace, and shepherd. God covered them in His glory and cloaked them in holiness and righteousness. God revealed these eternal truths to His people through the names and titles He was known by in the Old Testament.

- **Although God revealed multiple names and titles to describe Himself, how do they reinforce the teaching of Deuteronomy 6:4 that God is one?**

Throughout the Old Testament, the one God of Israel distanced and distinguished Himself from the multiple deities of the heathen nations that surrounded Israel. The God of Israel was invisible. (See Hebrews 11:27; Colossians 1:15.) (PPT) The God of Israel refused to be downgraded to the status of an icon. (See Exodus 20:4–5.) The God of Israel declared He was the only God. (See Deuteronomy 6:4.) (PPT) The God of Israel revealed Himself through Creation by signs and wonders, and through His names and titles.

The Old Testament saints understood God had a name that was above every other name and that it was yet to be revealed: “And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one” (Zechariah 14:9, KJV). (PPT) The patriarchs, the prophets, and common Israelite citizens longed for the mystery name of God to be revealed.

When Jacob wrestled with the angel of God at the Jabbok River, he cried out, “Tell me, I pray thee, thy name” (Genesis 32:29, KJV). At the burning bush, Moses asked God His name. (See Exodus 3:13.) When Manoah and his wife were visited by an angel of the Lord concerning the birth of their son, Manoah inquired, “What is thy name?” (Judges

13:17, KJV). The prophet Agur inquired of King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, “What is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?” (Proverbs 30:4, KJV). Their questions were left unanswered. The mystery name of God was to be revealed in the future. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises” (Hebrews 11:13, KJV).

When Christians are asked, “What is God’s name?” the answers will vary. Many will give answers such as God, Father, Yahweh, Jehovah, Elohim, Adonai, and El-Shaddai, among others. But if any of these were God’s final revelation of His name, then there would have been no need for Jacob, Moses, Manoah, Agur, or Isaiah to inquire after His name, since all of these names and titles of God were well known by those inquiring. These men of God were clearly longing to know the mystery name of God referred to in Zechariah 14:9.

- **What do these passages (Zechariah 14:9; Genesis 32:29; Exodus 3:13; Judges 13:17; Proverbs 30:4; Hebrews 11:13) teach us about the unfolding revelation of God’s name?**

The mystery name of God was revealed to Mary in Matthew 1:21 and was forever linked with salvation. (PPT) (PDG) “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21, KJV). (PPT) The name of God that the Old Testament saints longed to know was delivered by the angel Gabriel at the conception of the Son of God!

Isaiah had prophesied (Isaiah 7:14), and when delivering the baby’s name to Mary and Joseph, Gabriel concurred (Matthew 1:23). The child to be born would be God with us! The promised child was not the second member of a triune Godhead, as some mistakenly postulate; He was the manifestation of the invisible God of the Old Testament. (See Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3.)

Some teach the Godhead is a mystery. **The apostle Paul proclaimed that the mystery of the Godhead was revealed at the birth of Christ.** “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (I Timothy 3:16, KJV). (PPT) Which God was manifest in flesh? The God of Genesis 1:1—the Creator God.

When the shepherds heard the good news of Christ’s birth, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11, KJV), another piece of the revelation of God manifested in flesh was provided.

Jehovah had already proclaimed He was the only Savior: “I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour” (Isaiah 43:11, KJV). (PPT) The only way Jesus could be the Savior was He must be the Incarnation of the Old Testament God of Israel.

In the Book of Acts, Luke recorded that Jesus was the one and only name that could save fallen humanity. (PPT) (PDG) (See Acts 4:12.) (PPT) Why? Because, in the apostle Paul’s words, “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9, KJV).

- **How do you reconcile Isaiah 43:11 with Matthew 1:21?**
- **What are some names people use when addressing God?**
- **Can you think of other verses of Scripture that link the name of Jesus with salvation?**

Since Jesus is the saving name of God, baptism in the name of Jesus was an integral part of the New Testament covenant.

In His discourse with Nicodemus, Jesus made it abundantly clear that, to be saved, a person must be born again. Jesus warned Nicodemus that if he was not born of the water and of the Spirit, he would never see the kingdom of God (John 3:3) (PPT) and would never enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5). (PPT) The drama of this passage cannot be overstated. Nicodemus was not some unbelieving heathen. He was a highly respected Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. He was a believer! Yet Jesus commanded him to be born again.

How is one born again? How does one enter into the New Covenant? The new birth is comprised of repentance, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues. (See Acts 2:38.) (PPT) To be sure, belief is an essential prerequisite for the new birth, but the new birth requires acting on belief.

Jesus and the apostles repeatedly linked New Testament salvation to baptism. (PPT) (PDG) Mark's rendering of the Great Commission reads, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16, KJV). In the apostle Peter's first message, the listeners were so convicted, they cried out, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37, KJV). Peter responded with, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38, KJV).

Peter was adamant about the essentiality of water baptism. (PPT) (PDG) In I Peter 3:21, he declared, "Baptism doth also now save us" (KJV). (PPT) In today's Christian climate of easy believism, Cornelius of Acts 10 fame would already be saved. It was said of him that he was devout, feared God, gave much in the offering, and prayed always. In other words, he was a believer and undoubtedly a strong candidate to be a deacon or board member. But when Peter preached to Cornelius, even after Cornelius was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, Peter "commanded" him to be baptized in Jesus' name! (See Acts 10:48.) (PPT)

Baptism is not the tail on the dog. It is not just the outward sign of an inner work. As we have already seen, baptism is part of the salvation process. (See Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21.) The apostle Paul concurred. In his epistle to Roman Christians, he reminded them, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death" (Romans 6:3-4, KJV). (PPT)

The subject of the Godhead is forever united with the message of salvation. When a

person understands that Jesus is God, then it only makes sense to be baptized in the name of Jesus and follow through with the plan of salvation as given to us by Jesus.

- **What did Jesus have to say about the importance of baptism?**
- **What did the apostles say about the importance of baptism?**

No discussion on water baptism would be complete without an understanding of Matthew 28:19. Jesus said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (KJV). (PPT)

The operative word of Matthew 28:19 is “name.” In this case it is as important to notice what the verse does not say as what it does say. The verse does not use the plural word “names” but rather uses the singular word “name.” The apostles were commanded to baptize in the singular name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

With that understanding, the following questions are essential: What is the singular name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? What name did the apostles use in baptism? What is the only New Testament name associated with salvation? What is the saving name of God? The answer to all four questions is Jesus!

The apostles always and only baptized in the name of Jesus. (See Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5.) Acts 4:12 reads, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (KJV). (PPT) What name was being referred to in Acts 4:12? The only possible answer to that question is “Jesus.”

Some suggest that the apostles were in error when they baptized people in the name of Jesus. That is an untenable position for a Bible-believing Christian. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (II Timothy 3:16, KJV). Scripture cannot contradict Scripture. If the apostles were somehow in error, then it undermines the credibility of the entire New Testament, written by those same apostles!

Some would suggest that it is better to obey the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19 than the words of Peter in Acts 2:38. That is the whole point. When the apostles baptized in Jesus’ name, the apostles were obeying Christ’s command to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is Jesus!

If one believes in a triune god, then a triune baptismal formula seems reasonable. But consider the baptismal formula that employs the words “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.” First, it is a no-name baptism! Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are titles. I am a father, son, and husband, but I cannot sign legal documents using my titles or roles on the signature line and make them valid. A signature requires a name. Baptism requires a name. Jesus is the name.

Second, there is no biblical precedent for using a baptismal formula that employs the words Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In the Bible, Christian baptism was always administered in the name of Jesus. There is no efficacy in a no-name baptism. The participant goes down in the water a dry sinner and comes up a wet sinner! Without the name, Christian baptism is powerless!

- **Explain how Matthew 28:19 and Acts 2:38 are expressing the same thought.**
- **Are we baptized in the name of Jesus because we are saved or so we can be saved? Explain.**
- **Are you baptized in the name of Jesus?**

FINISH

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions until he reached Ephesus, on the coast, where he found several believers. ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ he asked them.

‘No,’ they replied, ‘we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.’

‘Then what baptism did you experience?’ he asked.

And they replied, ‘The baptism of John.’

Paul said, ‘John’s baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus.’

As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:1–6, NLT).

When the apostle Paul met up with these disciples at Ephesus, he inquired about their new-birth experience. When he realized they had not yet received the Holy Spirit, he immediately questioned their baptism. These believers had submitted to the baptism of John the Baptist, but not to Jesus’ name baptism. Upon this revelation, the apostle Paul explained that they needed to be rebaptized in the name of Jesus.

Have you been baptized in the name of Jesus since you believed? If not, what are you waiting for? Today is the day of salvation! (See II Corinthians 6:2.)