**Systematic Biblical Truth  
God the Father: The Attributes of God**

I. The names of God.

A. The names and titles in Scripture are unveilings; God unveils Himself.

We begin the section of God’s attributes with a short discussion on God’s names. The reason is that God’s names reveal many of His attributes. We learn about His character, position and actions (what He does) in His names.

Not so in our culture… but is other cultures and through history… names of people meant something about that person… if your name was Shoemaker… you were a shoe maker… someone in my extended family traced back my last name Bailey…

It went back to the British Isles… a Bailey was a judge of sorts in the legal system. We get the word Bailiff from it… but the judges name would have actually have been Bailey.

All through the Bible… names meant something about the person… Joshua means “God will exalt”…. The Hebrew pronunciation of Joshua is Yeshua…hundreds of years after Jeremiah was someone else with that name…besides my grandson…… any guesses?

Jesus…. Jesus and Joshua are the same names with the same meaning….. God will exalt…. And He did didn’t He?

There are many names for God in the Bible… there are over 900 names and titles for God in both Old and New Testaments,, each one reveals something about the nature of God (and Jesus).

Names were also cause for reverency

There are two primary names for God in the Old Testament.

B. Elohim.

1. “El” was the word for “god” among the Semitic people of the ancient Middle  
 East. It was a generic term for god.

In the mythologies of the ancient word, El was emasculated by the up and coming new powerful god Baal. The ancients looked at El as a weak has-been castrated and powerless diety. No one was grabbing for the name of El, so by the time of the Old Testament, the term became exclusively the God of the Bible.

But to distinguish El of the Bible from El the worthless god, another name was always attached to El, a name that would describe an aspect of the mightiness of the true God. This presented a God to the world that was different than the weak El god.

The God of the Bible was…*El haggadol*= the great god…El-olam = God of eternity. It is only in the book of Job that God is simply El without any further description.

a. In the Old Testament there are three closely related terms: ‘el, ‘eloah,  
 ‘elohim.

Elohim is the very first word for God in the Bible. It is found in Genesis 1:1 *In the beginning God (El-ohim) created the heavens and the earth.* The name is repeated 28 times in that chapter. Elohim defines God as “the creator”.

So God’s name tells us something about Him… He is the creator. His name also asserts that the world was created… it were not self-existent… it was created by Elohim. That word translated “created” in Genesis 1:1 is *bara* which is a great word…

Not only does it mean “to fashion, shape, form”…. But it emphasizes the initiation of something new… that never existed before… God did not just “re-form” existing matter….. He created new matter from nothing!

And God simply “spoke” it into existence…. Elohim.

Another interesting thing about Elohim is that it is not singular but rather plural… Some have used that as evidence for God being three persons…. Individual persons not one. But this “plural” does not suggest that there are several gods but rather the one god is exalted above all others…

The plural Elohim always follows a singular verb form… which would not be the case if it was a plurality of gods. Elohim lets us recognize the singularness of God…. Yet the unity of the godhead…. Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Genesis 1:26 *Let us make man in OUR image.*

Elohim is found 2570 times in the Old Testament.

C. YAHWEH or YHWH (Original Hebrew)

YAHWEH occurs more than 6800 times in the Old Testament. 50 times in the abbreviated form “Yah” YAHWEH is very unique in that it is the only personal name for God in the Bible. English translations often make the distinction between this name and other names for God by spelling it “Lord”. SO when you read “Lord” in your Bibles, that is YAHWEH.

1**.**  History.

a. Exodus 3:14

If you remember the story of Moses… when he had become an old man of 80yrs. God spoke to him from the burning bush. Moses was to return to Egypt to set his people free… Moses recognizing his old age as an excuse said to God “*Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt*?”

Moses had lost the self-confidence he had in his youth…Moses saw no way he could carry out the mission… God responded to Moses with a promise “*I will certainly be with you* (Ex. 3:12)”… but Moses still hesitated… then Moses asked the question that lead to the revelation of the most significant O.T. name for God.

Moses said to God “*Indeed when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘the God of your fathers has sent me to you’ and they say to me ‘What is His name?”… what shall I say to them?*

God responded (Ex. 3:4) *God responded to Moses , ‘I AM WHO I AM… and He said ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel “I AM has sent me to you.”*

2. Translation.

a. YAHWEH or YHWH is composed of 3 Hebrew letters (tetragrammaton),   
 Yod, Hey, Vav. Y=Yod H=Hey Vav=W…H  
 Nobody really knows for sure what they mean.

--They could mean simply “I AM”.

--Some say it means I AM THE SELF EXISTENT ONE.

-- Some say MY NAME FOREVER.

--Most likely the meaning would be in the context of the Moses  
 story. Throughout the story, God is always either saying He will  
 be there with Moses or His people. And throughout the story, He  
 is there with His people. God is not merely self-existent,. As  
 **YAHWEH He is ever present** with His people!

So you can see…. The name YAWH says something about who God is… His characteristics… He is ever present…. He is the creator….

There is a debate on how YAHWEH should be pronounced. Old Testament Hebrew was often written using only consonants… There were no written vowels. That makes it hard for us! No one knows for sure how it was pronounced in the O.T. days. In 1100AD Jewish scholars produced the Massoretic Text of the Bible.

In this text, the scholars added vowels to the Hebrew text. The special name of God was so sacred that no observant Jew would pronounce the name. When reading scripture, a person coming to that name would substitute an entirely different word…. That word became “Adonai” which means “Lord”

This rule is called *Kethive Kere. “Written one way to be read another”*

The Massorites added vowels in between the consonants… “a,” “o,” “a,”which they took from Adonai…. Added them to the consonants YHWH in other words YeHoWaH.

The translators of the King James Bible followed this convention and translated YHWH as “Iehovah” which became “Jehovah”. So Jehovah does not represent the correct way to pronounce the covenant name for God. …. And you can tell that to the next Jehova’s Witness that comes to your door!

(Latin-- combined consonants of YHWH transliterated as INVH and the vowels of ADONAI to pronounce Iehovah).

D. Compound names.

1. Yahweh compounds (see pg. 156 in White Book).

a. *Yahweh-shalom*—God is the Lord of peace.

b. *Yahweh-shammah—*God is the Lord is there.

Because He is and will be who He is… God will restore Israel as a saved nation in the Promised Land and will establish a new temple in a renewed Jerusalem which will be called by the name “The Lord Is There”. (Ezek.48:35).

2. El and compounds (See pg. 157 in White Book.) *Elohim* is the plural of the root  
 *el*.

a. *El Shaddai—*Traditionally translated as “God Almighty”.

b. *El Elyon—"*God most high”.

E. Some other names (non-compound)

1. *Tsur—*rock (impregnable strength).

2. *Ab*—Father … the Aramaic translation would be “Abba” The Swedish translated it Abba to name their biggest pop group.

F. Expressions of God’s character as informal names.

1. **From creation**—A lion (Isa. 31:4); an Eagle (Deut. 32:11); a Lamb (Isa.  
 53:11); a Hen (Mt.23:37).

2. **From human experience**—A Bridegroom (Isa. 61:10); Husband (Isa.545:5);  
 Shepherd (Ps. 23:1).

All that Scripture says about God uses anthropomorphic language—language that speaks of God in human terms….. human attributes we can understand.

So from the names of God we learn much about the characteristics of God….we call those His attributes.

II. The Attributes of God (Groundwork).

What are attributes? One’s characteristics.

What are some characteristics for Dave Baumgarnter?

When it comes to God’s attributes… it gets a little difficult…

A. The difficulties of defining.

1. Our attempt to describe the indescribable (Isa. 40:28; Rom. 11:33).

# **Isaiah 40:28 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**28Do you not know? Have you not heard?  
The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth  
Does not become weary or tired.  
His understanding is inscrutable.**

**Inscrutable= unknowable….. man is always trying to unscrute the unscrutable.**

**Romans 11:33 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**33Oh, the depth of the riches [**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+11%3A33&version=NASB#fen-NASB-28243a)**]both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!**

2. The limitations of human attributes.

We define God’s attributes with our human understanding of the attributes which is limited, finite, incomplete. Example: Love, we cannot comprehend God’s love, we can only know our own experience of love which is imperfect, limited and partial.

3. The irreverence of the discussion.

Just as the early Jews would not say the name of God due to respect, many view the discussion of His attributes irreverent in that any attribute will fall short of the immensity of God’s actual attributes.

B. The ground rules in understanding attributes.

1. Perfections vs Attributes.

a. Perfections—*aretas* **=** excellencies. Each characteristic of God is perfect as God is   
 perfect (1st Peter 2:9).

1 Peter 2:9 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

**9**But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for *God’s* own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

b. Attributes—does not inherently specify *perfect* characteristics.

2. Absolutes.

a. God is fully each of His perfections.

If God is not fully love, fully holy, fully good, then He isn’t fully God.

b. God’s perfections qualify each other.

Because God is completely each perfection. Then all perfections compliment each other. “His justice is a holy justice, and His love is a righteous love.” [How does this help us in understanding God?].

c. God’s perfections are active.

All of the perfections are completely active… God is never passive or inactive in any aspect of His essence (nature). His love is never “shelved”. He is always love.

d. God’s perfections should be studied in concert with one another.

One should not study one single perfection in isolation from the others. To understand His love, you must understand His justice.

e. God’s perfections are “reflexive”.

All of His perfections are focused on Him. What God is, He is to and for Himself before His perfections are directed toward anything or anyone else. In other words… His perfections are all there for His glory. They make up His glory.

A discussion in the white book about some view God as not having many attributes/perfections but rather only one “inscrutable” perfection which incorporates all our concepts of attributes.

III. The attributes/perfections.

A. The Incommunicable Perfections.

There are two basic classifications of perfections. We should be careful not to “divide God in two” not having the harmony between the two classifications be in our reality. Incommunicable perfections are those characteristics unique to God; self-existence, immutability. We do not have any of these characteristics. The communicable perfections are those in which we too can incorporate in our lives such as goodness and love.

[In each of these tell why these are important for us….why they are good]

1. *Independence* (Aseity)—God is independent of all things. (Ex. 3:14; John  
 5:26; Ps. 90:2; Rev. 4:11).

**Exodus 3:14 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**14God said to Moses, “[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+3%3A14&version=NASB#fen-NASB-1594a)**]I AM WHO [**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+3%3A14&version=NASB#fen-NASB-1594b)**]I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+3%3A14&version=NASB#fen-NASB-1594c)**]I AM has sent me to you.’”**

**John 5:26 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**26For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;**

**Psalm 90:2 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**2Before the mountains were born  
[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+90%3A2&version=NASB#fen-NASB-15381a)**]Or You gave birth to the earth and the world,  
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.**

**Revelation 4:11 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**11“Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they [**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+4%3A11&version=NASB#fen-NASB-30781a)**]existed, and were created.”**

**Why is it so vital that God is independent?...**

2. *Immutability*—God’s perfect unchangeableness in His nature, character,  
 purpose and promises (Ps. 102:25-27; Mal. 3:6; James 1:17).

**Psalm 102:25-27 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**25“Of old You founded the earth,  
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.  
26“[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+102%3A25-27&version=NASB#fen-NASB-15548a)**]Even they will perish, but You endure;  
And all of them will wear out like a garment;  
Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.  
27“But You are [**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+102%3A25-27&version=NASB#fen-NASB-15549b)**]the same,  
And Your years will not come to an end.**

**Malachi 3:6 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**6“For [**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Malachi+3%3A6&version=NASB#fen-NASB-23127a)**]I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, [**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Malachi+3%3A6&version=NASB#fen-NASB-23127b)**]are not consumed.**

3. *Infinite and Eternal*—Beyond all limitations of time and space. Never  
 began never will end ( Isaiah 41:4; Ps. 90:2; 1 Tim. 1:17).

**Isaiah 41:4 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**4“Who has performed and accomplished *it*,  
Calling forth the generations from the beginning?  
‘I, the Lord, am the first, and with the last. I am He.’”**

**Psalm 90:2 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**2Before the mountains were born  
[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+90%3A2&version=NASB#fen-NASB-15381a)**]Or You gave birth to the earth and the world,  
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.**

**1 Timothy 1:17 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**17Now to the King [**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Timothy+1%3A17&version=NASB#fen-NASB-29714a)**]eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, *be* honor and glory [**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Timothy+1%3A17&version=NASB#fen-NASB-29714b)**]forever and ever. Amen.**

**God is unchangeable… can He…does He change His mind?**

How then do we explain verses that seem to say that God *does* change His mind? Verses such as [Genesis 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen%206.6), “The LORD was grieved that He had made man on the earth, and His heart was filled with pain.” Also, [Exodus 32:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod%2032.14) proclaims, “Then the LORD relented and did not bring on His people the disaster He had threatened.” These verses speak of the Lord “repenting” or “relenting” of something and seem to contradict the doctrine of God’s immutability.  
  
Another passage that is often used to show that God changes His mind is the story of [Jonah](https://www.gotquestions.org/life-Jonah.html). Through His prophet, God had told Nineveh He would destroy the city in forty days ([Jonah 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jonah%203.4)). However, Nineveh repented of their sin (verses 5–9). In response to the Assyrians’ repentance, God relented: “He had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction He had threatened” (verse 10).  
  
There are two important considerations involving the passages that say God changed His mind. First, we can say statements such as “the LORD was grieved that He had made man on the earth” ([Genesis 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen%206.6)) are examples of anthropopathism (or anthropopatheia). Anthropopathism is a figure of speech in which the feelings or thought processes of finite humanity are ascribed to the infinite God. It’s a way to help us understand God’s work from a human perspective. In [Genesis 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen%206.6) specifically, we understand God’s sorrow over man’s sin. God obviously did not reverse His decision to create man. The fact that we are alive today is proof that God did not “change His mind” about the creation.  
  
Second, we must make a distinction between *conditional* declarations of God and *unconditional* determinations of God. In other words, when God said, “I will destroy Nineveh in forty days,” He was speaking *conditionally* upon the Assyrians’ response. We know this because the Assyrians repented and God did not, in fact, mete out the judgment. God did not change His mind; rather, His message to Nineveh was a warning meant to provoke repentance, and His warning was successful.  
Why is it a good thing that God is unchangeable?  
4. *Omnipresent*—God is present at every point of space with all that He is  
 (1st Kings 8:27; Rev. 10:6).

**We never have to pray for God to be with us!**

**1 Kings 8:27 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**27“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the [**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Kings+8%3A27&version=NASB#fen-NASB-9013a)**]highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!**

**Revelation 10:6 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**6and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there will be delay no longer.**

5. Simplicity (Unity)—He is indivisible. He is one.

**Mark 12:29 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**29Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord;**

6. *Omniscience*—Knows all things, cannot learn (Mt. 10:30; Ps. 139:2; Jer.  
 1:5)

**Matthew 10:30 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**30But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.**

**Psalm 139:2 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**2You know [**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+139%3A2&version=NASB#fen-NASB-16242a)**]when I sit down and [**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+139%3A2&version=NASB#fen-NASB-16242b)**]when I rise up;  
You understand my thought from afar.**

**Jeremiah 1:5 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**5“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
And before you were born I consecrated you;  
I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”**

7. *Omnipotence*—The ability to do anything consistent to His nature  
 (Gen. 18:14; Job 42:2).

# **Genesis 18:14 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**14Is anything too [**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+18%3A14&version=NASB#fen-NASB-439a)**]difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, [**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+18%3A14&version=NASB#fen-NASB-439b)**]at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”**

**Job 42:2 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**2“I know that You can do all things,  
And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted**

8. *Perfection*—He is perfect in the sum total of all His parts  
 perfections (2nd Sam. 22:31; Mt. 5:48).

**2 Samuel 22:31 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**31“As for God, His way is [**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Samuel+22%3A31&version=NASB#fen-NASB-8634a)**]blameless;  
The word of the Lord is tested;  
He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.**

**Matthew 5:48 New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

**48Therefore [**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5%3A48&version=NASB#fen-NASB-23283a)**]you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

**Next time: 168-188**