

Be a Berean!

The Bereans ...received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day.

(Acts 17:11)

[“Be a Berean” will regularly cover topics that arise during the “Acts 29” and “Lifted Up” Bible classes. Contact Franklyn Pfeil–liftedup@lockportalliance.org–with questions or comments.]

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"I AM"

No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. (John 1:18)

He is the image of the invisible God. (Colossians 1:15)

He who has seen Me has seen the Father. (John 14:9)

Q. What is God's name?

A. Jesus.

Q. No, I mean the old guy with the white beard. In the Old Testament.

A. There is no old guy with a white beard in the Old Testament who says he's God!

Q. Well, forget what He looks like. What is God's name in the Old Testament?

A. 'I AM.'

Q. Frankly, Franklyn, I'd sooner believe Bugs Bunny is God than that you are!

A. No, silly. God's name is 'YHWH' in the Old Testament. It means 'I AM.'

Q. I never saw 'YHWH' in my Bible.

A. Right. In your Bible and in mine, YHWH is rendered 'LORD,' all in capital letters.

Q. Why?

A. Because the Jews thought it was disrespectful to say God's name--and that it might violate the 3rd commandment. So they took the vowels from 'Adonai'-- which means 'Master' and is rendered 'Lord' in the Bible, using upper- and lower-case letters. They jammed the vowels from 'Adonai' into 'YHWH,' and came up with 'Jehovah.'

Q. I've seen that name--'Jehovah'-- in an old Bible.

A. The American Standard Version of 1901 uses 'Jehovah' instead of LORD. If you ever see an old copy, grab it! 'Jehovah' is a lot closer to God's name than 'LORD' is. God would prefer that His name be known, used, spoken.

Q. How do you know?

A. He gave Moses his name on Mount Sinai in Exodus 3:14, from the burning bush. Moses had asked who he should say gave him the credentials and authority to lead the Jews in Egypt. God said, "Tell them I AM sent you." God explicitly intended His name to be spoken, heard, feared, revered, known, and loved. He didn't mean for it to be transliterated, combined, re-combined, and then retro-fitted so that we really don't know what it sounds like. It's like forcing a standard nut onto a metric bolt. Nothing good ever comes of it.

Q. O.K., see if I've got this straight: The vowels from 'Adonai,' which is rendered 'Lord' in our Bibles, were taken and inserted into YHWH, which leaves us with 'Jehovah.' So Jehovah isn't really God's name, either. Right?

A. Right.

Q. Why aren't there any vowels in YHWH?

A. There were. God spoke them, but Hebrews don't use vowels in written text, so the actual vowel sounds between the consonants Y-H-W-H are unknown. They were lost because the name was never spoken. The closest guess is that it sounded like 'Yahweh.' But that's just a guess.

Q. Finally, my question is answered! The old guy with the white beard in the Old Testament is named Yahweh.

- A. I told you, there is no old guy in the O.T. with a white beard who said he is God.
- Q. So who told Moses that his name is YHWH?
- A. God.
- Q. Man, this is like "Who's On First?"
- A. Why?
- Q. Because.
- A. What?!
- Q. I don't know.
- A. Naturally!
- Q. Wise guy. Which of the names do you use? What do you call God?
- A. I call God Jesus, just like I said at the start. Jesus made it very clear that He is YHWH.
- Q. When?
- A. In John 8:58, Jesus told the Pharisees, "Before Abraham was, I AM." The Pharisees clearly understood Jesus' statement to be a declaration of His deity. They took up stones to kill Him, because they considered it blasphemy to even say YHWH, let alone claim to be YHWH.
- Q. So, the old guy with the white beard in the O.T. was Jesus?
- A. Will you cease and desist with the old guy in the white beard! When God is on earth in the Bible, you can almost always think 'Jesus.' Old Testament appearances of Jesus are called preincarnate appearances. That means that he had not yet come in the flesh. God never appeared in the flesh until the baby from Bethlehem arrived.
- Q. You sure about all of this?
- A. There are some murky, mind-stretching trinitarian issues at play, because God is one in His essence, three in His person. But when my Savior flat-out tells me that He's YHWH from before Moses and Abraham, I don't take up stones to throw at Him. I just stand in awe, then go home and try to pound these things into my head. Can I tell you a secret? Promise you won't tell a soul?
- Q. I promise. Tell me a secret!
- A. Just like you, I had to struggle to replace 'the old guy with the white beard' with the real YHWH. I guess we've all seen too much Charlton Heston, Cecil B. DeMille, George Burns, and Michelangelo. But look under every line of scripture, and 'the old guy with the beard' isn't there.
- Q. So does God the Father ever appear? Let's say it that way.
- A. Yes.
- Q. When?
- A. In the New Testament! At Jesus' baptism and at Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain, God the Father appeared, but only as a voice from above.
- Q. What's the Holy Spirit doing?
- A. Hovering. Re-creating.
- Q. The Holy Spirit doesn't say much.
- A. He lets His results speak for themselves.
- Q. Where can I learn more about YHWH?
- A. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

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['Be a Berean!' will re-visit this topic in the next installment, when the implications of God's name in the process of salvation will be explored.]

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It is our fervent hope that you will 'be a Berean' by attending one or more of these Bible-based classes this week! —

“Acts 29” Bible Class—Sunday at 9:45

“Everyday Wisdom for the Average Joe” (men)—Sunday at 9:45

"The Lord's Prayer" (women)--Sunday at 9:45

"Five Lies That Ruin Relationships" (young adults)--Sunday at 9:45

"Lifted Up" Continuous Bible Class—Thursday at 6:00 p.m.