The Names of God

Bible Study Schedule, 2018

- 11/13 Names of God
- 11/20 Pre-Thanksgiving Service
- 11/27 Israel/Palestine trip recap
- 12/4 End of Year Church Meeting
- 12/11 Names of God
- 12/18 Names of God
- 12/25 Christmas
- 1/1 New Year's Day
- 1/8 Bible Study resumes in 2019

Outline

- Names of God in the Hebrew Bible
- Names of Jesus in the New Testament
- Using the Names of God in prayer

Names of God

- Significance of names in the Bible and the Ancient Near East

- Names speak to one's characteristics, one's "essence."

- Deities in the Ancient Near East were known by their names

- Baal, Shemesh, Dagon

Names matter

- ▶ Speak to the nature of God
- ▶ Inform us, remind us of who God
- ▶ Pray and include names of God
- ▶ Repeat certain names of God
- ▶ "Reminding" God and ourselves
- ▶ Names of God shape our theology

How do our names for God expand or limit our theology?

- ► "I am" statements in the Gospel of John
- ► Metaphors
- ► Use what we know to describe what we don't know
- ► First word, comes usually from the world we know and extends to the unknown
- ► Natural tension
- ► "vibrating," full of life

Metaphors…

- Metaphors speak about the great unknown…
- Expand our understanding of how the world works
- Challenge us to see things differently
- Open up new possibilities

Metaphors for God….

- Are our attempts to speak about those aspects of God that are unknown
- Expand our understanding of how God works
- Challenge us to see God differently
- Open up new possibilities for our relationship with God

- In this respect, Jesus is a metaphor for God
- "I am" statements
- Jesus is teaching us about God by telling us who he is

Metaphors for God are theological statements!

► "…personal, relational images are central in a metaphorical theology – images of God as fater…and so on. The Judeo-Christian tradition has always been…relational in its religious languages."

Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*

Our Father…

- Prior to this formulation
- God is creator
- God is judge
- God is protector, provider, healer, one who sees, banner, etc.
- Father is revolutionary…
- Why?

Familial Language

- ▶ How do we become family?
- ▶ Birth
- ▶ Adoption
- ▶ Marriage

God as Father

- Is revolutionary
- Expands our understanding of how God works
- Invites us to see God differently
- Provider, healer, banner… as functions
- Father language invites us to think about the nature of God's connection with us
- Father language is incomplete

Is and Is Not

- Tension in metaphor is expressed through the "is" and the "is not."
- In what ways is God our father
- In what ways is God not our father?

Limits of Metaphor

- ▶ When it no longer vibrates
- ▶ When it becomes the only lens or language for God
- ▶ When it becomes idolatrous
- ▶ Because it is language and all language is indirect or incomplete

https://binged.it/2B4wh2M

What is the goal of metaphorical language?

- ▶ To envision ways of talking about the relationship between the divine and the human which are nonidolatrous, but relevant
- ▶ Ways which are meaningful to all peoples

Names for God in OT and NT

- Always more than one
- Why is that?
- God's personal name
- Speaks to God's essence
- אהיה אשר אהיה
- " I am that I am," or…

God as Father…

- Powerful
- Effective
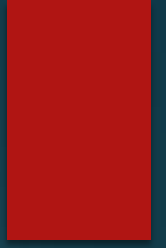- Facilitates a relational understanding of God that had meaning in the time of Jesus and today
- Why I like it…

God as Father

- ▶ Metaphor to help us see God in new ways
- ▶ Remembering God's divine name
- ▶ אהיה אשר אהיה
- ▶ Are there other images for God that also facilitate an understanding of God?

God as Mother…

- Deuteronomy 32:18
- Deuteronomy 32:11
- Ruth 2:12
- Psalm 91:4
- Matthew 23:37
- Luke 13:34
- Psalm 91:4

- Isaiah 49:15-16
- Isaiah 66:13
- Isaiah 44:24
- Isaiah 40:11
- Isaiah 32:10-11

El Shaddai

Making room…