

# DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

September 24 – 28, 2007



September 24, 2007

“YHWH”<sup>1</sup>

‘Yahweh’, the name revealed to Moses at the burning bush,<sup>2</sup> has always been considered the most sacred of the divine names. Even though Leviticus 24:16 clearly refers to blasphemous use in uttering a curse, the passage was seen as justification for an almost superstitious avoidance of speaking the name, Yahweh, out loud. When reading the Scriptures they substituted Adonai or Elohim and when vowel points were added in later versions of the Hebrew text to aid readers, the editors substituted the vowels for Adonai so that the correct pronunciation might remain hidden. Medieval scholars rendered the name ‘Jehovah’, but recent scholarship affirms that the correct pronunciation is something like ‘Yahweh’.

The superstition and dread surrounding ‘Yahweh’ is unfortunate in that it obscures the reassurance that God was seeking to give to his people in revealing himself as “I am that I am”. ‘Yahweh’ underscores the unchangeableness of God, especially in relation to his people. As he had ‘been there’ for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he would be there for Moses and indeed for all God’s people for all time.

*“The LORD (Yahweh) is my strength and my defense;  
he has become my salvation.  
He is my God, and I will praise him,  
my father’s God, and I will exalt him.” Ex. 15:2*

‘Yahweh’ is used of no one but Israel’s God, the one true God. It was not meant to be secret, but it is exclusive and sacred. Special reverence is due all the names of God, but this one in particular.

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<sup>1</sup> See also Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> on the significance of ‘Yahweh’. Hebrew was originally written only in consonants.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 3:13, 14

September 25, 2007      **“The LORD of Hosts”**

In Scripture, the name Yahweh often appears with the addition, ‘tsebhaoth’. Together they appear as ‘The Lord of Hosts’ in older translations or as ‘The Lord Almighty’ in more modern ones.

The word ‘tsebhaoth’ is used in reference to the ‘host’ of the army of Israel and to the ‘starry hosts’ of the night sky, but in this context it refers to the ‘hosts’ of angels that surround the throne of God in heaven.

“Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts,  
you his servants who do his will.”<sup>1</sup>

The phrase is not meant to portray God as warlike. Rather, it expresses the glory of God. The Lord rules heaven and earth. He is surrounded by angelic beings who declare his praise and do his bidding. He is worthy to receive glory from all his creatures.

The vision of God, surrounded by thousands of glorious heavenly beings is meant to provoke awe and wonder. Like Isaiah and John, we are in no way worthy of this company!<sup>2</sup>

Yet, “*the Lord of Hosts is with us*”.<sup>3</sup> This glorious and all powerful God is with and for his people! In our difficult times we are One who commands all the armies of heaven on our side.

And it shines its glory on the Lord Jesus Christ, whose birth was hailed by a ‘great company of heavenly host’ who were praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven...”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Psalm 103:21 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 6 and Revelation

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 46:7,11

<sup>4</sup> Luke 2:13-14

September 26, 2007

## God is 'Independent'

***“Our God is in heaven;  
he does whatever pleases him.” Ps. 115:3***

God is 'self-existent'. He was not created or caused to come into existence by any other being or agency. Everything else – this world, the universe, time itself – has had a beginning and was created by God. Had God willed otherwise, Creation might never have been or it could have been a very different sort of reality. God alone simply 'is'. He stands apart from the rest of Creation.

In some religions it has been intimated that the gods require human worship or other actions for their will to be done, for their psychological well-being or even for their continued existence. But the one true God is truly independent. He does not 'need' us or anything we might do for him: *“And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.”*<sup>1</sup>

God is also independent in his thoughts<sup>2</sup> and in the powerful execution of his will<sup>3</sup>.

Awareness of the independence of God should not cause us to feel distant from him. Rather it augments the glory of his grace. God is not compelled to interact with us because he must. He does so because he chooses to. There is no 'have to' about his love for us. It is given graciously from the one being who is truly free.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 17:25

<sup>2</sup> Romans 11:33-34

<sup>3</sup> Daniel 4:35, Romans 9:19, Psalm 115:3

September 27, 2007

## ***God is 'Immutable'***

***“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”<sup>1</sup>***

Because God is perfect in his being and his attributes, he is ‘immutable’ – he does not change. God cannot ‘improve’ and he does not ‘decay’. His knowledge and holy character and other perfections remain forever the same.

This should provide for us a secure foundation in a changing world. Just as we rely upon certain physical ‘laws’, such as gravity, to work on a consistent basis, so we can rely upon the character of God. The One who is truly righteous and holy will not become evil or capricious. The One who is by nature loving will not become, for no reason, distant or aloof. Our all-powerful heavenly Father who is able to work all things together for good for those who love him will never become feeble or weak – there is no ‘kryptonite’ that can bring that about.

In our time the pace of change seems to be ever-increasing. ‘Truths’ and values once thought to be constant are now seen as transient or even disposable. Even in the Church, change is constant and, often, God-willed. If we look for ‘anchoring’ places in institutions or anywhere else in Creation, we will be disappointed. God alone is immutable and the one fixed constant upon which we can anchor our lives.

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<sup>1</sup> James 1:17. See also Psalm 102:27, Hebrews 1:11-12

September 28

***'Immutable, but not  
Immoveable'***

While many passages of Scripture affirm that God is 'immutable' in this sense, other passages ascribe change to God. For example, while he existed from all eternity, God 'became' a Creator. Two thousand years ago God the Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. After the resurrection, God began to take up residence in his people as the indwelling Holy Spirit. God's will also sometimes appears to change his avowed purposes in response to prayer or sin.<sup>1</sup>

If we find this confusing, it is to some extent based on misunderstanding. God is immutable in his being and attributes, but he is not immoveable or inflexible.<sup>2</sup>

God graciously enters into many, varied relationships with human beings. In his infinite wisdom and creativity, he is able to juggle all the variables and accomplish his will. There is movement or 'change' in the dynamic of his relations with Creation, but not in his being, character or purposes. The Bible often speaks 'anthropomorphically' – as things appear from our point of view. As Paul said, now we see things as though through wavy, smoky glass. In heaven all things will become clear.<sup>3</sup>

In jazz music, every performance is to some extent different. The musicians have to know the score, but they are not bound to it. They are encouraged to improvise and they have to be creative/flexible enough to adapt as they interact with one another. Our God has that creativity and flexibility to perfection.

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<sup>1</sup> For eg.: Exodus 32:10-14, Jonah 3:10

<sup>2</sup> In fact, in human beings, inflexibility is often a weakness, indicative of insecurity or lack of creativity.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:12