



One God—four Concepts

Is God wrathful and ready to mete out punishment to the evil and unbelieving? Or is God a more benevolent creator? Does God influence events on Earth, or merely watch human affairs unfold from afar?

Such questions have been debated by scholars and theologians for millenniums.

The result of a study conducted by Baylor University concluded that Americans view God in four different ways:

1. Authoritarian God.

A deity who is very judgmental and engaged with the world.

2. Benevolent God.

A deity who is not judgmental but still very active in human affairs.

3. Critical God.

A deity who does not interact with the world, but who still views some events on Earth with disfavor.

4. Distant God.

A deity who is removed from human affairs.

Researchers have found that 85% to 90% Americans answered, “Yes,” when asked if they believe in God. Even though most believe in God, there is a diversity about how they believe in God. They do not agree on what God is like, what God wants for the world, or how God feels about politics.

The “four gods” embody these differences. For example, Americans in the East lean toward a Critical God, Southerners toward an Authoritarian God. Midwesterners believe more in a Benevolent God, while those in the West perceive a Distant God.

Women tended toward a more engaged deity—the Authoritarian or Benevolent God—while men tended toward a god less involved in the world. (The entire report can be accessed through Baylor’s web site: www.baylor.edu.)

How do you view God?

It is an important point to notice that the various names of God are used by the sacred writers as to bring out the various aspects of His character and dealings. Thus, the first chapter of Genesis sets forth Creation as an act of power; hence Elohiym is always used. The second chapter which properly begins at the fourth verse, brings Elohiym into communion with man; hence He is called Jehovah. In the third chapter it may be observed that the Serpent avoids the use of the name Jehovah. In the fourth chapter the offerings of Cain and Abel are made to Jehovah and this is the case with the whole sacrificial system both under the Patriarchal and the Levitical dispensation.

Elohiym in creation

Elohiyim Jehovah in communion

Jehovah in the sacrificial system

This is my perspective of the God of the Scriptures as given in titles and names.

1. He is the Elohiym—the God of Creation

“In the beginning **God** (Elohiym) created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1).

This name properly represented One only Being, who revealed Himself to man as Creator, Ruler and Lord. He is the Creator of heaven and earth, the Sustainer of all existence. He is the “Putter forth of power.” He is a being to whom all power belongs.

Genesis, chapter one, describes the creation process that ends with the creation of Man and the forming of Woman out of man. By his acts of creation in respect to mankind, he becomes their Father; one that loves and is involved in their lives.

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The everlasting God (Elohiym), the LORD (Jehovah), the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to {him who} lacks might He increases power” (Isa 40:28-29).

If the scripture is true, how can God be considered a “Distant God” or “Critical God?” God was recognized as the Creator, the Father of the Adamic Race and very much committed to their welfare.

2. He is the El-Shadday, the all Sufficient One

“Now when Abram was ninety_nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty (El-Shadday); walk before me, and be blameless” (Gen 17:1).

The title really indicates the fullness and riches of God’s grace, and would remind the Hebrew reader that from God comes every good and perfect gift—that He is never weary of pouring forth His mercies on His people, and that He is more ready to give than they are to receive. The word is connected with a root that signifies a breast.

Genesis 17 is a chapter that describes a covenant made between God and man. The sign of the covenant was circumcision. A covenant implies an interrelationship between two.

If the above is true, can He be a distant God, unwilling to interfere with the affairs of his creation? Does not El-Shadday reveal God’s love for mankind and His desire to shower them with abundant blessings?

3. He is Adonay, the Lord or Master of each member of the human family, and that He consequently claims the unrestricted obedience of all.

“After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great. And Abram said, “O **Lord** (Adonay) **GOD**, what wilt Thou give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus” (Gen 15:1-2)?

Jesus, who came out of the bosom of God, revealed the compassion of God to man. He went about doing good, healing those who were sick and delivering those who were in the clutches of the devil. He was called, “Master” or the Teacher from God that instructed mankind about the importance of obeying God. The “Lord and Master” of the Old Testament is revealed in Christ Jesus.

Leon Willis