

Names of God, Pt 6 - Jehovah Rapha

Names of God Series

By Pastor Matt Morrell

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Fourth Baptist Church

900 Forestview Lane North

Plymouth, MN 55441

Website: www.fourthbaptist.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/fourthbaptist

It was Charles Spurgeon who wrote, “The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of a child of God is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in the contemplation of the divinity. It is a subject so vast that all of our thoughts are lost in its immensity, so deep that our pride is drowned in its infinity. No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind than thoughts of God. But while the subject humbles the mind it also expands it.”

And Charles Spurgeon went on to say, “He who often thinks of God will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe. The most excellent study for expanding the soul is the knowledge of the godhead. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man as a devout earnest continued investigation of the great subject of the deity. Plunge yourself into the godhead’s deepest sea. Be lost in his immensity and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul, so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief, so speak peace to the winds or trial as a devout musing upon the subject of the godhead.”

I mentioned some weeks back that Charles Spurgeon, when he was 21 years old opened his Sunday morning message with these words. Is it any wonder that he was the preacher and the teacher, the Christian that he was?

Consequently, we are spending our Wednesday evenings together studying the names of God. And as we explore each name we discover something of the nature and the character of our great God and we come to know the wonder of his ways and his works as revealed in his names.

And our intent is not simply to learn more about God, but to genuinely know God. And our premise has been this. Our premise is this. God has progressively revealed himself to his people by introducing himself with and identifying himself by different names at different times. God’s names were given to man by God himself during specific times of man’s needs so that we might know that God is our all in all.

Continuing with our review this evening you will remember how that we discovered these names to date, אלהים (el-o-heem').

אלהים (el-o-heem'), help me with a definition or a description of the name אלהים (el-o-heem'). The eternal, triune Creator as we learn from Genesis chapter number one where God or אלהים (el-o-heem') created the heavens and the earth. In fact, the name אלהים (el-o-heem') is cited so frequently in the first chapter of Genesis one might contend that Genesis chapter one is not so much about the creation as much as it is about the Creator.

אלהים (el-o-heem'), the eternal triune Creator.

How about יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw'). Help me? Self existing one. Very good. Is introduced to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus three. יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') is from the Hebrew verb "to be" or "to live." And it is simply a statement of God's existence. And Moses was questioning God, "Who am I?" And, more importantly, "Who are you?"

If I am to go back to Pharaoh and go into Egypt and say that God sent me, how do I define or describe that God in a polytheistic culture?

And so God identified himself as יהוה (yeh-ho-vaw') or simply, the self existing one.

About how אל שרי (ale shad-dah'- ee)? אל שרי (ale shad-dah'- ee). Oops. I gave it to you there. God almighty. אל (el) being the generic name for God and שרי (shad-dah'- ee), almighty. אל שרי (ale shad-dah'- ee) is the God who can intervene in his own creation and cause an old man and a barren woman to conceive.

You will remember in Genesis chapter 18 the question was asked of Abraham and Sarah, "Is there anything to hard for אל שרי (ale shad-dah'- ee) for God almighty?" Of course, the answer is no.

Next we studied the name רענסי (ad-o-noy'). רענסי (ad-o-noy') means Lord or master, very good. In calling God our רענסי (ad-o-noy') we are surrendering to his authority and to his mastery in our lives. Of course, in the New Testament the Greek equivalent is the word κυριος (koo'-ree-os) also meaning Lord or master. And in calling Jesus Christ our Lord or master, we are surrendering to his authority and mastery in our life.

And although when we normally think of a master we think of a slave. And when we think of a master and a slave we think of an abusive relationship such as was the case during the years of the slave trade here in our own country. But the reality is that our master God, our רענסי (ad-o-noy') is a good master. And we can look to him and go to him for help.

And then most recently the name יהוה יראֵה (yeh-ho-vaw' yir-eh') meaning God will provide and also God who sees in Genesis chapter 22.

Abraham was to sacrifice his only son Isaac on Mount Moriah and when Isaac said to his father, "Behold or I see the wood and the fire, but where is the lamb?" Abraham answered, "God sees or God provides himself a Lamb."

And most often we claim the name יהוה יראֵה (yeh-ho-vaw' yir-eh') when we need God's financial provision in our lives and I believe that is appropriate, but greater than that we must remember that our יהוה יראֵה (yeh-ho-vaw' yir-eh') is the God who saw our need and provided the Lamb, his only Son Jesus Christ for us, יהוה יראֵה (yeh-ho-vaw' yir-eh'), God provides, God sees.

This evening we are going to consider the name יהוה רפאֵה (yeh-ho-vaw' raw-faw') and יהוה רפאֵה (yeh-ho-vaw' raw-faw') means God who heals.

In invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Exodus chapter number 15. Exodus chapter 15 we are going to read a number of portions of Scripture this evening, but let's begin in Exodus chapter 15.

Israel had been in bondage in Egypt for 400 years. But then God raised up a deliverer, his name was Moses, to lead Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land and after a series of 10 plagues that God brought upon Egypt at the hand of Moses, Pharaoh let the people go. However, soon Pharaoh had a change of heart and Pharaoh pursued the Hebrew people and the Egyptians caught up with Israel at the Red Sea. And, of course, we know of the miracle that took place there at the Red Sea. God parted the waters of the Red Sea so that Israel could pass through on dry ground and escape the Egyptians.

Exodus chapter 15 records Israel's celebration after crossing the Red Sea. First is the song of Moses in verses one through 19; second is the song of Miriam in verses 20 and 21. And if you will indulge me, all me to read the song of Moses beginning in Exodus 15 verse one.

Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the LORD, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him. The LORD is a man of war; The LORD is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them; They sank to the bottom like a stone. "Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed the enemy in pieces. And in the greatness of Your excellence You have overthrown those who rose against You; You sent forth Your wrath; It consumed them like stubble. And with the blast of Your nostrils The waters were gathered together; The floods stood

upright like a heap; The depths congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword, My hand shall destroy them.' You blew with Your wind, The sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters. "Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders? You stretched out Your right hand; The earth swallowed them. You in Your mercy have led forth The people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength To Your holy habitation. ¹

You get the picture of the celebration of God's people having been delivered from Egypt into the Red Sea.

We come then to verse 20 and now Moses' sister also has a song.

Verse 20.

Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them: "Sing to the LORD, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"²

How exciting it must have been for Israel, for the Hebrew people at this point. And this is a high of all highs for Israel. This is the mountain of all mountain top experiences. Can you imagine participating in this celebration?

But verse number 22 marks an abrupt change. After the song of triumph, the song of Moses, the song of Miriam, we have a record of Israel's murmuring and discontent and bitterness.

Verse 22.

So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"³

After the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea was the misery of the desert wilderness. And I pause here to have us consider how that this is sometimes the story of our lives, isn't it? When the circumstances are positive it is so easy to celebrate, but when the circumstances are negative it is so easy to complain. And it had only been the space of

¹ Exodus 15:1-13.

² Exodus 15:20-21.

³ Exodus 15:22-24.

three days and yet Israel is now complaining because they are in the desert wilderness. And after God had piled up the water of the Red Sea and opened a dry road for them to escape the Egyptians, they are now complaining in the wilderness.

And I can't comprehend how that God's people here could change so quickly. They just thought about what had just occurred. Two million people coming out of Egypt through the Red Sea and somehow God sent a delusion to all of those soldiers so that the whole army rushed into the waters behind them. What a foolish tactic and strategic mistake for that army. But nonetheless, Israel forgot the mercy and the might of God in delivering them from Egypt when they were faced with a simple need, a basic need, the need of water.

In the space of three days in the wilderness they did finally come upon water, but they couldn't drink it because it was bitter water. מָרָר (maw-raw') means bitter, verse 23.

And in a bit of biblical irony, the people became bitter because the water was bitter, verse 24 or was it that the people were already bitter? And I would propose to you this evening, I believe that Israel was already corporately bitter because of the centuries they had spent in bondage and all of the covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were nothing more than tall tales in people's minds passed down through the generations and the people were bitter because of the hardship of their toil in Egypt.

You say, "Well, pastor, yes, they can't be bitter because they just had this celebration."

Oh, really? Is it possible for a church auditorium to be crowded with worshippers who sing praises to God and yet are bitter? I think so.

I want you to turn back to Exodus chapter four. Moses has arrived on the scene here in Exodus four verse 29.

Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. And Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people. So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.⁴

Their faith is renewed. Their hopes are rekindled. But because of Moses things would only get worse. Pharaoh no longer would provide straw for them to make bricks. They had to find their own straw. The hardship got worse.

Turn the page to chapter five verse one.

And, again, indulge me as I read an extended portion here.

⁴ Exodus 4:29-31.

Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.'" And Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go."

So they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go three days' journey into the desert and sacrifice to the LORD our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword." Then the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people from their work? Get back to your labor." And Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are many now, and you make them rest from their labor!" So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their officers, saying, "You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick as before. Let them go and gather straw for themselves. And you shall lay on them the quota of bricks which they made before. You shall not reduce it. For they are idle; therefore they cry out, saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' Let more work be laid on the men, that they may labor in it, and let them not regard false words."

And the taskmasters of the people and their officers went out and spoke to the people, saying, "Thus says Pharaoh: 'I will not give you straw. Go, get yourselves straw where you can find it; yet none of your work will be reduced.'" So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw. And the taskmasters forced them to hurry, saying, "Fulfill your work, your daily quota, as when there was straw." Also the officers of the children of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, "Why have you not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and today, as before?"

Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, "Why are you dealing thus with your servants? There is no straw given to your servants, and they say to us, 'Make brick!' And indeed your servants are beaten, but the fault is in your own people." But he said, "You are idle! Idle! Therefore you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.' Therefore go now and work; for no straw shall be given you, yet you shall deliver the quota of bricks." And the officers of the children of Israel saw that they were in trouble after it was said, "You shall not reduce any bricks from your daily quota." Then, as they came out from Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron who stood there to meet them. And they said to them, "Let the LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us." So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people?"

Why is it You have sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all."⁵

Long story short, we are now in the middle of nowhere, in danger of dying of thirst in Exodus 15 and before you die of thirst, of course, you suffer the illness of dehydration and if you have ever suffered the illness of dehydration it is horrific. And now we are in Exodus 15. Oh, there was a short season of celebration after crossing the Red Sea. Three days later there is no water, only bitter water and the people are bitter and complaining again against Moses.

Look at verse 25, Exodus 15:25.

“So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them. And there He tested them.”⁶

At first it may appear that God was on trial here and that God passed the test. However, it was really the people who were on trial. God was proving them, verse 26.

“...and said, ‘If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD [יְהוָה] (yeh-ho-vaw’) who heals you [רַפָּא (raw-faw’)].”⁷

For I am יְהוָה רַפָּא (yeh-ho-vaw’ raw-faw’).

And God here in Exodus 15 is using a powerful object lesson to show them their need not for water, but for the healing of their bitter souls.

And we need healing for our own humanity. Disease is rampant. And human existence is a fight for survival against illness and sickness and inevitable death and we seek the fountain of youth in every way and we build hospitals to treat us and to do research to find the cure for all that ails the human body. But man’s need for healing is even greater in the moral and the spiritual realm. And this is what God is saying to the people and illustrating the moral and spiritual condition of his own people.

The prophet Isaiah wrote this.

“The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, There is no soundness in it, But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; They have not been closed or bound up, Or soothed with ointment.”⁸

⁵ Exodus 5:1-23.

⁶ Exodus 15:25.

⁷ Exodus 15:26.

⁸ Isaiah 1:5-6.

Folks, we are ill. We are sick. We need healing. We need יהוה רפא (yeh-ho-vaw' raw-faw'), the Lord who heals.

In Exodus chapter 15 the issue was not bitter water. The issue was a bitterness in the hearts and the souls of the Hebrew people.

I would like to spend a moment and comment on the notion of bitterness. What is bitterness? I would like to offer this definition. Bitterness is harbored hurt. It is not wrong to hurt. The reality is that we all hurt at some point or another. Many times, in fact, we hurt each other intentionally and unintentionally. It is not wrong to hurt. But if you harbor that hurt, if you hold on to that hurt, it will become a cancer that will destroy you.

The Bible calls it bitterness. Hebrews 12:15.

“...looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.”⁹

How does one become bitter or what causes the hurt that we harbor if I might say it that way?

I have got two suggestions for you. First, I wanted it and God said no. I wanted it and God said no.

My mind races to 1 Samuel chapter one where Hannah wept, the Bible said, in bitterness of soul. Why was she weeping in bitterness of soul? Because she wanted a son. And God to that point had said no.

I wanted it and God said no. Is there something that you really, really want and God has not yet given you that desire of your heart? And it hurts. And you say, “Why, Lord? Why? Why can't I have this or experience that?”

And it hurts. And if you harbor that hurt it will become bitterness.

Secondly, I had it and God took it away. I had it and God took it away.

Of course, I think of Job in Job chapter 10. He cried out and wept in bitterness of soul.

Job had it all, but he lost it all.

And I can't help but think of Israel, of the Hebrew people. First they wanted it. For 400 years they waited and wanted the Promised Land, but evidently the answer was no. And they were hardened and bitter.

⁹ Hebrews 12:15.

Then God delivers them out of Egypt, crossed the Red Sea, three days into the wilderness and now what they had they have lost. Remember, I believe, in Numbers chapter 11 the leeks and the onions and the garlic and the melons and all of the good things that were back in Egypt. They had it and God took it away and so there was bitterness.

And God brings them to the waters of Marah, I believe, to teach them a profound lesson about their own illness, the resentments, the hates and the anger and the harbored hurt in their own hearts and then ultimately to teach them about himself, God, יהוה רפא (yeh-ho-vaw' raw-faw'), the Lord who heals.

Remember our premise of this entire series on the names of God is that God has revealed himself to men at a specific time of man's need. Why? So that we might know that God is our all in all, the antidote, the solution.

Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases.¹⁰

And may I encourage you this evening that I am sure there are many, if not all of us who are hurting. Are you hurting tonight? Is pastor Matt the only one who ever hurts in life? If you are hurting, don't go to the medicine cabinet. Don't go to the refrigerator. Don't go to the mall. You will regret all of those things. If you are hurting, go to the name of God, יהוה רפא (yeh-ho-vaw' raw-faw') and pour out your heart and weep and cry out and in that bitterness of soul and say, "Lord, I need healing." And he can heal you of that.

I would encourage you in the course of this series as we are identifying and examining the names of God to claim these names and to pray these names and use the names of God. As you address God say, "Lord God, I am hurting."

No, don't say, "Lord God." Say, "יהוה רפא (yeh-ho-vaw' raw-faw'), I am hurting. I am bitter. I resent my mom and dad. I have been hurt by the injustices of my boss. I am suffering because of a circumstance in my local church. Lord God, heal my heart. I am sorry, יהוה רפא (yeh-ho-vaw' raw-faw'), heal my heart." And he will do that.

Father God, we thank you so much for revealing yourself as יהוה רפא (yeh-ho-vaw' raw-faw') in Exodus 15. Lord, forgive us for the highs and the lows that we experience, first celebrating, worshipping, perhaps on a Sunday, but then three days later, into the desert wilderness the poison of bitterness surges from within and we find ourselves complaining and grieving. And, God, remind us that you are our יהוה רפא (yeh-ho-vaw' raw-faw'), you are our all in all. And, Lord God, for the one that is here this evening carrying the hurt, the harbored hurt of perhaps days and weeks and months and years, those wounds that just never seem to heal, oh God, I pray that you would draw that one to yourself and be that balm and heal them. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

¹⁰ Psalm 103:1-3.