**JEHOVAH WITH A DASH**

***A Sermon I Am Still Trying To Preach***

As a 19-year-old kid I was standing before a congregation of 300 people, knees knocking, sweat pouring off my brow, and cotton-mouthed from utter fear. There I preached my first sermon in 1971 in Tampa, Florida on the grand subject of “*God Almighty*.” Can you picture that? Any topic would have been easier than that, including the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! Trying to tell an audience of aged saints all I knew on “God Almighty” was pure insanity. Here it is, 50 years, and several thousand sermons later, and I’m still asking, “What was I thinking?”

Back then I didn’t know what I didn’t know. I thought I knew the answers. Today, I don’t even know the questions. I readily confess my ignorance, but just as readily confess my life-long fascination with knowing the God I serve. As the hymnist wrote, to write of the love of God would drain the oceans dry, even if I wrote a lifetime. Add to that His other attributes like grace, mercy, justice, patience, omnipotence, omniscience and other character traits and it would take all eternity to know Him (Jn. 17:3). On this side of heaven let us get started knowing God by studying names which describe Him.

Jehovah-Jireh. Jehovah-Rophe. Jehovah-Nissi. Jehovah-Shalom. Jehovah-Shammah.

In other words, “Jehovah” with a dash, followed by another name. God has used these names for our benefit. By understanding them, with the story that goes with them, you will know God more intimately, love Him more passionately, and worship Him more reverently.

***Jehovah-Jireh***. Read Genesis 22. Abraham’s crisis of offering Isaac as a sacrifice led the boy to ask his father “*where is the lamb for the burnt offering*?” Abraham replied, “*God will provide*.” When God stays his hand from killing his son, He shows him a ram caught in a thicket. He removes his son and replaces him with the ram. He names the place *Jehovah-Jireh*, meaning, “God-will-provide,” revealing God’s providence in our life.

**Jehovah-Rophe**. Read Exodus 15:22-26. Just three days removed from the miracle of the Red Sea crossing they were in the Wilderness of Shur and became thirsty. At Marah they found water, but it was bitter and they complained bitterly. Moses asked God for help, who then told him to put a certain tree into the water, which turned it to sweetness. He then said these words: "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-who-heals you." The Lord who heals. Jehovah-Rophe. God is the Great Physician who heals all physical and spiritual sicknesses of His people.

**Jehovah-Nissi**. Read Exodus 17:8-16. At Rephidim they again felt thirst from the hot Wilderness of Sin. They again complained and God delivered water when Moses struck the rock. They had barely been satisfied with that when another crisis came with their relatives the Amalekites (descendants of Esau, Jacob’s twin brother). Instead of giving aid to their kin, these Amalekites waged war. Joshua led an army of Israel in battle, while Moses sat on a mountain and held his rod up, with Aaron and Hur on each side strengthening his hand. God gave Israel a resounding victory that day. This led to Moses building an altar of sacrifice and naming it “The- Lord-Is-My-Banner” (i.e. Jehovah-Nissi). God is still the Banner flag His people follow.

**Jehovah-Shalom**. Read Judges 6:1-24. The Midianites were used by God to oppress Israel because of their sins. When they cried for deliverance God raised up Gideon to be their Judge. He asked for verification from God, who then showed him a sign he could not doubt as the Angel of God set fire to Gideon’s sacrifice and ascended in the fire out of his sight. It was then that Gideon “built an altar there to the LORD, and called it The-LORD-Is -Peace.” Jehovah-Shalom. God is indeed the God of Peace, just as Jesus came to tell us He is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).

**Jehovah-Shammah**. Fourteen years after Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed and Judah was in Babylonian captivity, the prophet Ezekiel preaches to a downcast people. All hope was lost. They were demoralized and depressed, believing God no longer cared for them. By the rivers of Babylon they sat and wept. “How shall we sing Jehovah’s songs in a strange land?” Into this dark hour God calls Ezekiel to bring hope. He prophesies of a restored temple, and a new day of joy and hope. He finishes this triumphant message with these words: "All the way around shall be eighteen thousand cubits; and the name of the city from that day shall be: The-Lord-Is-There." (Ezk. 48:35). Jehovah-Shammah. God has not forgot His promises. He is still there, working out His will to make Israel great again.

Jehovah-Jireh. Jehovah-Rophe. Jehovah-Nissi. Jehovah-Shalom. Jehovah-Shammah.

Jehovah with a Dash.

God is asking us to read the ancient stories of His exploits to slowly but surely come to know Him more fully. Yes, it will take a lifetime, even an eternity, to fully know this “God-Almighty.” What I said that day as a nervous 19-year-old rookie preacher was no doubt a lousy sermon (I preached it in about 12 minutes), but it has ever since led me on a journey of a lifetime that hopefully will end with a masterpiece oration as I describe the Jehovah I will see face-to-face. It is a sermon I am still trying to preach.

And all of God’s people said, AMEN!”

* Rick