

The Names of God

By Marian Burbage

Introduction

When we sing the hymn “How great thou art” especially in a large congregation, our hearts overflow with praise and wonder at our God’s greatness. Even then however we feel that we do not do justice to the greatness and majesty of our God. To help us with our view and worship of God over the next few days we are going to consider 12 of the names of Jehovah as mentioned in the Old Testament in particular. As God’s children we have the privilege of putting “my” before each title.

1. Jehovah Elohim – the Creator

Reading: Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Message: Generally, we don’t find it difficult to praise God as we think of His creation, from the smallest insect to the lofty giraffe, from the tiny acorn to the magnificent oak tree, from the human seed to the marvellously formed human body, besides the wonder of the universe, its dimensions, stars and planets that obey perfectly God’s laws of nature. However what difference does it make to you each day that He is Elohim my Creator?

The words of a song say, “I was made to walk with him”. Are you aware of this as you start each day? God’s work is perfect, and He created you in His likeness and image with all the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual attributes that you need to fulfil the life He has planned for you when you walk with Him.

As you come to the end of this day you may wish to think about how knowing God as Elohim your creator has made a difference in your life today.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you that you are my creator God, that I have been chosen from the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in your sight. You have made me to walk with you, to glorify you and enjoy you forever. Amen.

2. Jehova Rohi – My Shepherd

Reading: "The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1)

Message: The name of God as our Shepherd is well known to us and probably to vast numbers of people who do not follow Jesus. It is found to be a comfort to people especially in difficult times and when bereaved. Sadly, this is only momentary and they are unaware of the amazing truths that lie in the words “The Lord is my shepherd”. We also as children of God often do not value our privileges as sheep of His pasture. Do we know that security and comfort of knowing we are safe in the fold as our shepherd is watching over us, will bring us back to

safety when we foolishly wander away, will protect us from our enemies and even give His life for us which he has graciously done?

Do we know the blessedness of “Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life”? As you come to the end of the day consider whether knowing God as “my shepherd” has helped you to praise Him and thank Him with all your heart.

Prayer: Dear heavenly father I thank you that because of Jesus, I know you are the great shepherd of your sheep. I thank you too that “I shall not want” also means “I have all I need”. Help me to rest in you and praise you for your loving care. Amen

3. Jehovah Tsidkenu – Our Righteousness

Reading: “In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called, the Lord our Righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:6)

Message: What the truth of God’s righteousness does for us is so vast and amazing that it is beyond words to describe adequately. We will look at one aspect of it today which hopefully will help to see but a part of its wonder.

What does it mean to be righteous? Generally, in the world today people do “what is right in their own eyes” whilst true righteousness is to do what is right in God’s eyes, in our character, nature, actions and words. It is based upon God’s standard as the ultimate law giver. As we look back on our lives we realise how very far we have come from obeying His laws such as the 10 commandments and “love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind and your neighbour as yourself” Without repentance for all our wrongs and forgiveness through Jesus we cannot be reconciled to God. If we trust in Him, God’s righteousness becomes imputed to us, we are justified in His sight at once, acquitted of all guilt and brought into His favour” Dressed in His righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before the throne”

This is such a wonderful gift from our heavenly father but do we live in the freedom and joy that this brings us? Do we grieve over past sins when we could be rejoicing and praising Him for our standing now in Christ?

Romans 3 verses 21 to 26

Prayer: Dear heavenly father, we thank you that we can come boldly to your throne of grace because of your righteousness achieved for us by Jesus in His death and resurrection. Help us now through the work of the Holy Spirit to become worthy of the righteous state bestowed upon us in Christ. Amen

4. Jehovah Sabaoth – The Lord of Hosts

Message: This title appears several times in the Old Testament, often used as a military reference and means an army or military group. The Hebrew word can describe a multitude of people, angels or heavenly stars. It is an amazing name in that it shows the total sovereignty of a powerful God and was also used on many different occasions. The first main reference is found in 1 Samuel verses 10 and 11. We read that Hannah was in the temple and praying desperately to God for a child. In those days being barren was considered a curse from God. Hannah had been taunted by her husband's other wife who had borne him children. For years she had gone up to the temple and prayed to God for a child but her prayers were not answered. Again she cried to the Lord with all her heart and was weeping and fasting. She calls on Jehovah Sabaoth and promises to give her child to God for his service if he favours her with a child.

Her prayers were answered; Samuel was born and was used greatly in the Lord's service. This is quite a different example from the others we will look at but it shows when we are really desperate we will go to the highest authority, "The Lord of Hosts". Our view of God as Jehovah Sabaoth is crucial to our prayer life. Very simply prayer depends on who you consider your God to be. In 1 Samuel 17 verse 45 we read how David challenged Goliath as he faced him in the name of God Almighty/the Lord of Hosts. David triumphed in a situation where in human terms it would have considered to be impossible. In Isaiah 6 we read of the terrifying vision Isaiah received when God commissioned him for the work, He had planned for him to do. Seraphim appeared calling to one another "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty; The Lord of Hosts the whole earth is full of His Glory".

We also see evidence of times when people saw physical displays of God's power in battle. In 2 Kings 6 the King of Aram had sent a large army to capture Elisha as he had been told that he was God's man and the cause of the Aramites lack of success. As they approached, Elisha's servant became very frightened and asked Elisha what they should do, his reply was "Don't be afraid, those who are with us are more than those who are with them". Elisha asked God to open his servant's eyes and the servant saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

These events may seem far removed from us and in these days, they are not the usual way God reveals his power to us, however, we do hear of similar examples in our time. Many of you will have read of Maureen Wise's experiences when serving the Lord in Romania and Moldova. Civil war was rife, and they were in the war zone. This particular night she was sitting outside facing the high wall of the compound. Although she had been through many frightening and dangerous times, on this night, she was exceptionally anxious in fact beside herself with fear and was in tears. The pastor came to sit alongside her and asked her to look up. She did so but saw nothing.

He told her to look again and when she did, she saw the wall covered with angels in armour. All her fears melted away and her faith in the Lord of Hosts was again strengthened. God does work in many different ways, but we thank him that he has helped us in so many ways to increase our faith in him. We see his greatness and almighty power over all his creation. We read of his wonderful acts in the Old Testament, the power of Jesus in the gospels and his

Holy Spirit within us. As we come to the end of these studies in the Names of Jehovah let us all bow humbly before him in adoration, as we meditate on all his amazing attributes.

Prayer: Dear heavenly father, we praise you for who you are and thank you for your condescension in reaching down and lifting us up from the depths of sin. We thank you that we are your chosen people, a holy nation and your special possession. We ask for your strength to declare “the praise of Him who has called us out of darkness into His glorious light”. Amen.

5. Jehovah Shalom – Our Peace

Reading: Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)

Message: If we were to ask 100 people what their definition of peace was, we would probably get 100 different answers. Some may say, no noise, no wars, being in harmony with other people, no fears, a state of calm that is not disturbed by anything at all like a still pond with no ripples. Interestingly the Welsh word for Police Force is “Heddlu” which literally translates to “peace force”.

When we had a holiday in Barbados, we went to visit some caves by the sea. Our guide was a local Rastafarian whom we had met a few times on the beach. At the entrance to the caves there was quite a lot of noise, the waves crashing on the rocks below and the birds screeching. The noise faded a little as we walked in but suddenly there was no sound at all. This was due to the layout of the cave walls. As we stood still to wonder at this our guide said “this is where I come to chill out”. We were highly amused as we couldn’t imagine him being any more chilled than he had been when we had met him on previous occasions. How many times have we said in our families, let me have some peace to get on with things? At the end of the 2nd World War “Peace was declared”.

The peace of God however is not reliant on circumstances. It is sometimes described as the first blessing of justification. Sins forgiven and being reconciled to God. All our wrongdoing and guilt have been taken away through Jesus’ death on the cross. We can come into God’s presence dressed in Christ’s righteousness. Most of us as Christians know the facts but how does this knowledge give us peace in our everyday lives? In Jesus’ message to his disciples in John 14 he explains that though they were very fearful and anxious about his leaving he would send the Holy Spirit to teach them all things and remind them of all that he had taught them. This is true for us also for we have all the promises of the Bible available to us by the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Matthew 6:26, Zephaniah 3:17, Philippians 4:19.

When we think upon the greatness and faithfulness of our God and his unfailing promises then we can have true peace in all the circumstances of our lives.

Prayer: Dear heavenly father, we thank and praise you for the true peace that we have through Jesus’ death on the cross. We are so ready to look to our own resources for peace

but help us look to an all providing God and for us to cease from striving. We pray Lord for all those who do not know you as their Saviour and do not have the peace that you give. We thank you that one day wars will cease, and we will have harmony with all your children in heaven. Amen.

6. Jehovah Makadesh – Our Sanctifier

Readings: You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be sign between you and me for the generations to come so that you may know that I am the Lord who makes you Holy” (Exodus 31:13)

“He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight” (Ephesians 1:4)

Message: To sanctify generally means to set apart and separate. In the Bible to be Holy is used in a similar way i.e. to set apart for God. As our sanctifier God separates us from living to sin and to living for Himself. Our sanctification begins when we are saved and continues throughout our lives. When we accept Jesus as our Saviour we are declared sanctified/holy and then the work of the Holy Spirit begins to help us become what we are already legally declared to be, that is Holy like Jesus.

Perhaps a study from the world of sailing will clarify this point although a weak example. In some countries people can be credited with the title of Yachtmaster without ever having been to sea but have passed a Yachtmaster theory exam. Yachtmaster entitles you to sail boats from small to large in most countries, on your own or with crew and passengers. Thus, although given this title a person will need to go to sea with a tutor and experience a variety of situations over a period of time. For example, different weather conditions, storms, engine failure, man overboard situations, managing crew and passengers. As Christians we are declared righteous when we accept Christ as our Saviour, but we are a long way from the perfection of Jesus.

In the case of the Yachtmaster he might one day be worthy of the title using the knowledge he has gained from the theory, from his tutors and his experiences at sea. As a Christian our tutor is the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. Our knowledge comes from the Bible and other Christian literature along with our experiences as we trust in the Lord and walk with Him in all our life situations. The differences however are that we will not become perfect/wholly sanctified until we get to heaven, but we have the certainty of achieving that goal as God has promised to keep us until that day.

As we start each day how thrilling to know that God will carry out His sanctifying work in us, sometimes through trials and times of testing and others in times of joyful blessing.

May God himself the God of peace sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.

1Thess 4 v 23, 24

Prayer: Dear heavenly father, we thank you that not only do you forgive all our sins and dress us in Jesus 'righteousness but also give us your Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide us to become more like Jesus every day. We know that the devil is strong and will give us doubts and attack our faith, but we also know that Jesus has defeated the devil, the flesh and the world. We praise you that as we fully trust in Him, we will become more like Him every day. Amen.

7. Jehovah Nissi – Our Banner

Reading: And Moses built an altar and named it “The Lord is my Banner” (Exodus 17:5)

Message: The Lord as my Banner is probably a less familiar title to many of us, yet it is surprising how many times it is used in the Bible and in our songs. A dictionary definition says, “a strip of cloth bearing a slogan or design carried high on a stick or pole in a demonstration, or procession or hung in a public place”. It can also be a heading or advert appearing on a Web page. It can be a rallying call to a cause, to unite people, also used widely in the past in battles.

All banners can be said to have 4 things in common.

1. They identify the cause, the person or the product.
2. They can be seen/identified clearly often at a distance.
3. They invite people.
4. They unite for a purpose.

When we visit a tourist attraction especially abroad, we can often see several groups of tourists being led by a guide who identifies them self by a sign on a pole or stick so that their party can follow them or find them easily in a crowd. On holiday recently our group ended up with an extra person who had followed the wrong guide. In the Bible the name Jehovah Nissi proclaims God's protection, leadership and deliverance for His people. He is the one under whom we unite, He is our Saviour, we are rescued by Him and identified with Him.

When the Israelites were fighting the Amalekites, in human terms the outcome was a “no brainer” as the Amalekites had a large well-trained army whilst the Israelites were like wandering herdsmen with no experience in battle. God told Moses to take his staff and hold it up high overlooking the battlefield. While the staff was held high the Israelites prevailed but if it was lowered the Amalekites would have the advantage. When Moses became tired Aaron and Hur supported him to keep the staff up and the Israelites triumphed. This is a lovely example of how God as our Banner gives His children the victory. After this Moses built an

altar as a remembrance and named it "The Lord is my Banner". In the Psalms we find references to God's Banner, Psalm 20 verse 5, "May we shout for joy over your victory and lift up our banners in the name of our God". Psalm 60 verse 4 "But for those who fear you, you have raised a Banner to be unfurled against the bow". Then in the Song of Solomon 2 verse 4 "His Banner over me is love" In the New Testament Jesus said "And I when I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself".

In our songs we have: "Christ the royal master leads against the foe. Forward into battle see His banner go". "We go to all the world with kingdom hope unfurled"

Jesus is our banner, and He gives us our identity as God's children, He invites us, unites us and brings us victory. As you go about your day see if you can identify some banners and see if they have the 4 common features that we mentioned earlier.

Prayer: Dear heavenly father we thank you that an ordinary word such as banner, when applied to you, can convey power, strength and protection. We praise you most of all that your banner over us is love as shown by the giving of your son our Lord Jesus Christ to die on the cross for us. Through Him we have forgiveness of us and can walk in victory under your banner as your children. Amen.

8. Jehovah Rapha – Our Healer

Reading: "If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, your healer." (Exodus 15: 26)

Message: As we come to this attribute of God as "Our Healer" it is relevant to what are probably the two most important aspects of our life, namely our spiritual health and our physical health. In Britain when we meet people as we go out and about there are two main types of conversation: the weather and our health. How often have we unkindly said about person "all he talks about is his illness"? As important as our physical health is, our spiritual health is greater and actually impacts our physical health.

We praise God for all the examples we have in the bible of his work as healer. His miracle by the bitter waters of Marah, even here the piece of wood thrown into the water pointed forward to the wood of the cross of Jesus which is the source of all our healing. Isaiah 53 vs 6 says "by His wounds we are healed. The healing here meant that we would die to sin and live for God. All healing is from God, whether through rest, sunshine, a healthy diet, the skills of a doctor and the miracle of prayer.

God will also bring emotional healing through the peace that comes through forgiven sins. This helps us to heal rifts between us and others by being able to forgive as he forgave us. He

gives us a new self-image in Christ, he tells us he loves us just as we are, and we will start believing what he says instead of the negative thoughts we previously had. He often shows us the root of our problems and anxieties and helps us to hand them over to him.

Our current situation with the corona virus has made us very much aware of how fragile life is. So many have gone from a healthy life to struggling to survive and many have sadly passed within a couple of weeks. We thank God that through prayers and the dedicated work of so many front-line staff many people have been healed. However, as a Christian we can have peace, even in the face of death, as we know we will be fully healed when we get to heaven. God uses several ways to assist without healing, in his word we see Jesus demonstrate his healing powers beautifully when on earth he healed every possible affliction that humanity suffers. He did this to show us that he was the only one who could heal us from the root cause of all our troubles – sin. In the midst of our troubles, he says rejoice in the Lord always. He gives us the Holy Spirit to teach and remind us all the promises he has made and gives us God's family to love and to support each other.

Prayer: Dear heavenly father, we thank you that you are Jehovah Rapha, our healer and our great physician. We thank you for all the accounts of Jesus' healing miracles and in the Old Testament of your promises to heal when your people repented and turned back to you. Help us to be your workers in this field through prayer and our deep love and caring acts to others. Amen.

9. Jehovah Jireh – Our provider

Reading: “And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, “The Lord will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.” (Genesis 22:13-14)

Message: Today we look at Jehovah Jireh – The Lord our provider. This attribute is often described as the Lord “who sees” “who sees before” “who sees to it”. As his children we have the amazing gift of his providence. One of my favourite welsh hymns is ‘Rhagluniaeth fawr y nef’ which has now been translated into English by Edmund Tudor Owen and it is called ‘Great providence of heaven (both available on YouTube). This hymn really does paint an amazing picture of his providence.

In secular terms when we say “provisions” this usually means shopping, an unexpected gift, a cheque written to pay rent or a new job. We can treat God as a waiter when we think like this, we give him our orders and he provides. However, he does not just give us goods, but he knows each need of our hearts. These meanings do not touch on what God will provide and how he will meet our most profound need of a spiritual and physical life.

In Genesis we have most wonderful example of God's providence when Abraham had been asked by God to sacrifice Issac. Even while they were walking to the place of sacrifice and

gathering the wood God was making sure that the ram would be in the right place when needed. In addition to seeing God's providence, we are also challenged when we read of Abraham's unwavering faith in God's promises. This same God and those same promises are what we have now but how often do we practice the same faith that he had? He even named the place of sacrifice "the Lord will provide".

To provide can also refer to a rescue/ransom or a debt paid, which again points us to the great provision of God in Jesus (John 3:16), when he bore the punishment of all guilty ones so they could go free. Jesus is God's perfect and complete provision, the answer to everyone's deepest question and a fulfilment of their deepest need.

Most of the time however we do think of God as providing for us in terms of jobs, family, friends, church and answered prayers. In Matthew 6 Jesus tells his disciples about his care for even the birds of the air, how he clothes and feeds them, so how much more as our father does he provide us with what is best for his children without hesitation and at the perfect time.

As you go about your day today, as you have your needs, thank God for his provision and your health. Thank him for his creation as you see the beauty of the flowers, trees and hills and hear the song of the birds. Let the provisions that you see point you towards the great provision of Jesus our saviour and never forget God's greatest provision of prayer.

Prayer: Dear heavenly father we thank and praise you that you are our great provider. As we think on these truths our hearts overflow with praise at the wonder of your love and care for us. Help us Lord to show this love and care to others through the power of your Holy Spirit within us. Amen

10. El Shaddai - Almighty God

Reading: "When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless," (Genesis 17:1)

Message: As we look again at the wonder of our God his title of El Shaddai has so many shades of meaning. The all sufficient one, the overpowered, the one who nourishes, supplies and satisfies, the God of the mountains, he will do what he purposes to do against all opposition.

The title El Shaddai appears first in Genesis 17 vs 1 when God makes a covenant with Abraham that even at the age of 91 he would be the father of many nations. It is also seen in Genesis 28 vs 3 and 35 vs 11. The name is also found repeatedly in the book of Job. Though Job initially contended with the Almighty, God's display of power wisdom caused him to shut his mouth before the Lord's sovereignty and authority. (Job 42 vs 1-6)

The psalmist wrote that those who contend and plot against God in their wisdom, God would laugh at. God's wisdom and power are so far beyond us we would be foolish to contend with the almighty (psalm 2 vs 4, 37 vs 13).

In Habakkuk chapter 3 vs 16 we read how Habakkuk's heart pounded and his lips quivered as he heard of God's declaration of wrath on the unbelievers. Proverbs 9 vs 10 also reminds us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Unfortunately, in many of our churches today the judgement, wrath and power of God are unpopular topics.

Thankfully our almighty God is also mighty in love, and justice and mercy go hand in hand. Gods almighty power is shown to us in so many ways, his perfection in creation and how all creation is obedient to his command. We see the wonders he performed in the deliverance of his people through the wilderness. The miracles that Jesus performed, e.g. the water into wine, healing of the leper, raising Lazarus from the dead were all designed to display God's almighty power. Then we see the jewel in the crown of Gods power in the death and resurrection of Jesus, defeating the devil, the world and death.

Whilst we rejoice in the almighty power of God in these examples do, we truly believe that he is almighty in his dealings with us? Do we really believe that Abraham's God is our God? Is the almighty really on your side? (Acts 3 vs 25-26) Should you trust in him? (Psalm 84) If you return to the almighty will he return to you? (Zechariah 1 vs 2-3).

"A sovereign protector I have Unseen yet forever at hand. Unchangeably faithful to save Almighty to rule and command"

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, we praise and worship you today with fear and trembling at your greatness and our weakness. But we thank you that in your mercy you have dealt with our sinful state and have given us your strength for our weakness. We thank you for your unfailing love and gracious promises. Help us Lord in our everyday lives often with pain, anxiety and fears, to remember nothing is too hard for you and that you are our own personal almighty God. Amen.

11. Adonai – Master

Reading: "But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" (Genesis 15:2)

Message: This title of God is very similar to Yahweh or Lord but gives us more of a hint about what the Lord's role is in our lives. Adonai means master or lord. People in the Old Testament often used Adonai when addressing humans who were masters or lords over them. David refers to Saul as Adonai when David spared his life by the cave 1 Samuel 24 verse 8. Sarah refers to Abraham as Adonai when she hears that she will have a child. Adonai in a human and sometimes angelic sense appears to be acknowledging a person who has power or leadership over another. Names have important meanings in the Bible.

They carry an origin and purpose of someone's life. The title helps us to acknowledge that God is the master and sovereign of our lives. No human or angelic master can thwart his plan for us; Romans 8 verses 35 to 39. God is not merely "the very great Lord Master "he is my very great Lord Master". It is a personal ongoing and two-sided relationship between master and servant. In biblical times masters had a responsibility to protect, provide for and promote their servants to earned positions of authority. Jewish servants were considered members of their master's household.

Psalms 123 verses 2. Adonai reflects God's sovereignty, omnipotence and authority. It is important that we remember that he has the absolute right to define good and evil and his decree (as found in the Scriptures) is the supreme law. We live in a culture that wishes to throw off all authority and to define for it what is right or wrong. We need to guard against making any compromises or negotiations on these issues. We are often tempted as Christians to live our lives as though Jesus was not the Lord of our lives. When our culture sets our standards, it has become our lord and we have walked away from the authority of God.

It is interesting to look at the different ways the title of master is used in everyday life. Many years ago, a teacher was referred to as "schoolmaster". These days in most schools the head is known as Headmaster. A young boy was addressed as Master, how many of you remember "Happy Families", Mr Bun the baker, Mrs Bun, Master Bun and Miss Bun! We also have the TV series Master Chef. We have master of ceremonies and masterpieces and I'm sure you could think of many more. Many of these imply that they are "the best at" whatever subject they are involved with. People are generally happy to accept this title in these contexts but the idea of master as someone who rules over us has become extremely unpopular.

As we have witnessed recently the association with slavery understandably should be condemned but our culture seems to have gone to the other extreme "no one has the right to tell me what do "The recent virus shows us in stark focus that we are certainly not our own masters. We praise God that we have THE Lord and Master in our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the best in all things and as we have read already, he is totally removed from the image of the slave traders. Only in him do we find ourselves totally loved and cared for. He wants the very best for every one of his children and he died to secure the best, forgiveness of sin, reconciliation to God and eternal life with him.

Prayer: Dear heavenly father, we thank you that we have the privilege of having you as our lord and master of our lives. We thank you for your patience with our grumbling, our wandering ways and our pride when we think we know better than you. We praise you that you have sent the Holy Spirit to live within us to will and to do of your good pleasure. It is our delight to serve you, our gracious and loving Lord.

12. Jehovah Shammah – Abiding Presence

Reading: Ezekiel 48:35 “The distance all around will be 18000 cubits and the name of the city from that time on will be “The Lord is there” (Ezekiel 48:35)

Message: In Ezekiel we see this title being used and it shows a picture of the great mercy and patience of our God. At the height of Israel’s idolatry God withdrew his presence from the temple and from the city of Jerusalem also. This showed the Israelites that God had removed his protection from them. As a result, they were scattered to all parts of the earth and taken captive by surrounding nations. However, he did not leave them completely but continually drew them back when they repented.

In Ezekiel we read that God promised a permanent restoration of the nation and a return of his presence to Jerusalem and in that day the city would be called Jehovah Shammah. Looking forward we see this prophecy being fulfilled when Jesus was brought to the temple to be offered to God by his parents and then it points onward to the new True Jerusalem when Christ returns again. Revelation 21:1-2. So how does knowing God as our abiding presence help us today? Psalm 46 verse 1, God is our refuge and strength and ever-present help in trouble. Psalm 46 verse 11. The Lord of hosts is with us the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

He has been with us in the past/ our birth, childhood, adult life, family, work, holidays, happy times and difficult times. We may have only become aware of his presence and care when we came to know Jesus as our personal saviour. We weren’t aware of him or asked for his presence and yet he was with us.

How much more confidence do we have in the present as we know him personally, as the Holy Spirit leads into all truth. All he asks of us is that we trust in him, cease from striving and that “He is God” As we look to the future, we can have greater confidence for 2 reasons. Firstly, we can look back and remind ourselves of the times he has been there for us in good and bad times.

Secondly, we have his promises to us that are pledged by an almighty, unchanging and faithful God -. A God who loves us and that gave his beloved son to die for us so that we may be reconciled to him. Some people worship elements of the creation, the sun, moon, stars, or trees but we worship the Creator, an ever-present person who dwells within us through his Holy Spirit.