

God is Yahweh

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[0 : 0 0] But Exodus chapter 3, we're going to read verses 1 to 15. This evening we're going to look at the theme of God as, or God is, Yahweh, God is Jehovah, the name of God. From verse 1 of chapter 3, it's verse, page 46, if you want to use the church bibles. Yeah. Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jeffro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush. He looked and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned. And when the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush. Moses, Moses, he said, here I am. Then he said, do not come near, take your sandals off your feet for the place in which you're standing is holy ground. And he said, I am the Lord of, sorry, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look at God. Then the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings. And I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of the land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

And now behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me and I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel out of Egypt. Moses said to God, who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt? He said, but I will be with you and this shall be the sign for you that I have sent you. When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain. Then Moses said to God, if I come to the people of Israel and say to them that God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they ask me what is his name, what shall I say to them? God said to Moses, I am who I am. Then he said, say to this people of Israel, I am, has sent me to you. God also said to Moses, say this to the people of Israel, the Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob has sent me to you. Okay, that's quite a famous passage for us. We know the passage of the burning bush but also the revelation of the name of God that is given here. I think probably in our tradition we don't put a lot of, not a great deal of store or names in the same way that it would have been true biblically. And certainly very often in the Bible we see the names associated with something about the character of the individual. And that is clearly the case with God. When God is giving us names that he is revealing, he's really condescending to our level. God doesn't have a name, really God is. But he uses names to help us understand a little bit more about him. And it helps us to grasp a little bit about who he is. And the names of God in the Bible help us very much to understand his character and his nature. He is revealing himself through the names that he gives. And there's lots of names of God in the Bible. Can you think of some of the names of God in the Bible?

Elohim would be one, yeah. Very well known name of God. Jehovah, which is the name that we're going to look at this evening. Yahweh is another pronunciation of it. El Shaddai. Do you know what that means? Indeed. God Almighty. So there's various names. There's Abba. There's Adonai, Master. Alpha and Omega. Ancient of Days. Elohim, sort of the supreme name of God. And there's various different El. There's God plus different things like Hell Should I, we mentioned. El Sudkenyu.

Do you know what that means? God of righteousness. Or Jehovah, that's Jehovah Sudkenyu, sorry. Jehovah Jira, or Jehovah Jira.

[5 : 20] God will provide. Jehovah Sabaoth, God of hosts. Jehovah Shalom. Jehovah Nisi, God of banner.

There's lots of different compounds with El and also with Jehovah that we mentioned earlier. And what we're looking at this evening is Exodus chapter 3 where God speaks about His name.

When Moses is asking, what am I going to tell the people when I go down to Egypt? And he says, God says, I am, tell them I am who I am. Tell them I am has sent you. And then he goes on to say, say to the people of Israel, the Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abram Isaac and Jacob has sent you. And that's what we're going to look at this evening for just a few moments.

I am who I am. Or I will be who I will be. Yahweh is the Hebrew. And it is then translated the Lord in the third person in that verse that we looked at in verse 15. And if you notice there in verse 15, it's the Lord in small capitals. And that's always how the Bible writes out Yahweh or some of the older verses of Jehovah. And we find that again and again, well, just under 7,000 times in the Old Testament, a massive revelation of the name of God. And it was so holy that the Jews slightly later wouldn't even pronounce it. They wouldn't even speak it. They wouldn't even write it in full because they regarded the name as so holy. Which is why there's some questions about exactly how it sounds and what pronunciation we use with it. They replaced the name Yahweh with

Adonai, which is one of the other names of God, but we'll not get into the etymology of the word. Just want to speak for a moment about the name itself, then the context briefly, then the shock factor, then the comfort, then the challenge, five things very quickly that we can look through the name. So the name I am, who I am, I am has sent you, Yahweh, the Lord. But the I am name of God is a remarkable name. And I think it speaks of several things, a lot more things than we're probably going to discuss tonight. But I think part of it is that it speaks of mystery, inscrutability, God who just is, but the God who exists and doesn't reveal everything about himself, who was, who is, and who will be the I am, the self-existent one, the one, and that name kind of, it sucks up some of the other characteristics that we've been looking at, the fact that he is eternal, he is the ever-present God, the unchanging one. So what I will be,

[8 : 48] I have been, and what I am, I'm going to be, always the same, the infinity of the living God. And it's such an important revelation to speak of himself in this way. He's the great I am in in how he reveals himself, because it's just a reminder to us that whenever we look at the Bible, it actually doesn't matter how old it is. It doesn't matter how culturally different the situation that God was speaking into was. It's completely irrelevant that society has changed, because it doesn't matter, because God is exactly the same. He's the same God. He's outside of time. You know, we've been looking at some of these mind-blowing concepts over the last number of weeks, and it just reminds us that the God is unchanging. He's the eternal present. He is the eternal I am. He is always what he says he is, and what he reveals himself to be. He's not capricious. He doesn't change with time. He doesn't mold himself differently depending on the time in the society and the culture that he finds himself in. So the name of God as he reveals himself here just reflects a little bit of his unchanging, glorious, infinite and eternal character.

But what about the context then, because the context is always important, the way in which and the reason God reveals himself. And we're going to look at the venue, the visuals, and the verbals quickly in this context. So you've got the venue. Where's it happening? Who can tell me quickly? Where's all this happening? Where's this passage from? Where's Moses? Horib. Horib, correct.

Mount Horib. Yes, the desert of Sinai, the Mount of Horib. But Mount Sinai, a very important place publicly where God went on to reveal to Moses his Ten Commandments. So it's an important place for God's revelation as he makes clear more of his character. What about the visual here? What visual do we have in this story? If it's at Mount Horib in the desert, what's the visual that is bedding this revelation around? What's Moses looking at? A burning bush. Yeah, the answers are very easy. You don't need to worry about not getting ten out of ten. So it's a burning bush.

And that's an important context, because Moses recognizes, you know, when he looks at this burning bush, that it's something, there's something dramatic happening here. He knows it's out of the ordinary, because the bush is there. It's burning, but it's not being consumed. And it says in verse two that the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in the midst of the bush, even before God explains that he is there. And so there's this visual that helps us to understand and tells a little bit about the name that he's going to reveal. And for Moses, there's fear in the presence of God. There's a sense of danger, because there's a fire. There may be warmth for him as well, but there's this remarkable, miraculous, inexhaustible ball of energy, you know. And, you know, it's a desert. In a bush in the desert, light it with a lighter. Just goes up and it's away. So it's not like Heather on a Highland Glen, which might take a long time to light and smoke for ages, but it's in the desert. And yet there's this ongoing fire where the bush is not being consumed. It's not burning up. And it's there and in that context, that visual context of the burning bush that God reveals himself and speaks. And then we have the verbal. So we've got the visual, we've got the venue. And then we've also got the verbal of what God says here. And there's, there's, I wonder if you can pick out the two main things that God says here to Moses in the context of revealing His name. There's two things that you might pick up on that He says to Moses in the context here. Can anyone think what they might be? Sorry? Do not come near. I hadn't thought of that, but that's absolutely part of the holiness of God in the revelation of His name, but also in the burning bush and the holy ground that it was burning on. So there's that recognition of God's holiness. But there's two things primarily that He's speaking to. In verse 7, He says,

I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and I have heard their cry. So this recognition that He's coming as a covenant God to send Moses to redeem the people out of Egypt, they're His people. And in verse 12, He goes on to say, you're going to bring my people out of Egypt and they shall serve God on this mountain.

[14 : 56] And then if you've got your Bibles there, in chapter 6, He's also revealing Himself as the God who is going to be with Moses in what He does. First in the same chapter in verse 3, in chapter 3, verse 6, He says, I am the God of your Father. No, that's not the right verse.

Sorry, verse 12, He says, He said, but I will be with you and this shall be the sign for you, for I have sent you when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve them, God.

So He's saying in these early verses, one, these are my covenant people, the people I love. And secondly, He's saying to Moses, I'm going to be with you. So it's relational what He goes on to say.

And in chapter 6, He says the same thing. I appear to Abram, to Isaac, to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord Yahweh, I did not make myself known to them. I also established a covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they live as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groanings of the people of Israel from the Egyptians' oldest slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people, I am the Lord, I will bring you out from the burden of the Egyptians. And so you've got this recognition that when He's speaking and revealing His name, He's revealing Himself in this personal name, Yahweh, or the Lord, as the covenantal God, the God who is committed to redeem His people.

And that's going to be revealed in the Exodus, which is a monumental Old Testament event. He's heard their cry, they're His people, and He's going to bring them out of Egypt. And He's going to do it through Moses, but He says to Moses, I'll be with you. So there's this redemptive purpose that He speaks in covenant, but also this intimate and personal promise to Moses in the revelation of His name. So it's quite interesting because it's a transcendent name, I am who I am, but it really, it shrinks down to something really personal. I will be with you. This great transcendent God who reveals Himself, I'll be with you. The covenant God is going to come to His people, redeem His people who are slaves and bring them out of Egypt.

[17 : 48] So that's the context that we find this revelation of God's name. Now we're going to move quickly to the shock factor in John chapter 8. If you've got your Bibles.

John chapter 8, we're going to read 10 verses from verse 48 to 58. Jesus is arguing with the Jews, the Pharisees, the religious leaders, the children of Abraham, the Abraham who God had entered into covenant with, and the Jews answered him, are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan, Jesus, and have a demon? Jesus answered, I do not have a demon, but I honour my Father and you dishonour me. Yet I do not seek my own glory. There is one who seeks it, and He is the judge.

Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death. The Jews said to him, now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, as did the prophets. Yet you say, if anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death. Are you greater than Father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died? Who do you make yourself out to be? Jesus answered, if I glorify myself, my glory is nothing.

It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say He is our God. But you have not known Him, I know Him. If I were to say that I do not know Him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know Him, and I keep His word. Your Father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.

So the Jews said to him, you're not yet 50 years old, and you've seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am. So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. And now that's the shock factor, maybe not for us as our knowledge of God and the Bible, but an absolute shock for the Jews for whom this was the unpronounceable name, I am. And Jesus, this is not a grammatical error here. This is Jesus taking the Old Testament, most glorious revelation of God to himself and saying before Abraham was, I am. And so doing, in that one sentence, he's just soaking up everything about the character of God to himself. He's taking it, the covenantal, personal, promissory name of God, and he declares himself to be the ultimate revelation of the I am, of this redemption bearing God, the God who comes for His people. And it's a remarkable statement, and it's clearly what he meant as he spoke here, because the Jews were all about to stone him for blasphemy. It was the most blasphemous thing he could have said, very God of very God. And he's taking that name of Jesus, that name of God, the I am, taking it to himself. And so that Old Testament revelation of I am, which was translated Adonai, and Adonai in the Old, or was replaced by Adonai because it was such a holy name, that the Adonai of the Old Testament became kurios of the New Testament in Greek, which is

[21 : 36] Lord, translated Lord. And so we find that the testimony of the early believers is that Jesus is Lord. Jesus is master, Jesus is king, Jesus is Yahweh, Jesus is redemptive, and Jesus is personal.

It's a remarkable revelation here that we find Jesus taking, and then the New Testament attributing to him all the way through 700 times and more, he's called Lord in the New Testament.

And in the English translations, it's the same small capitals all the way through to indicate that it's not just Lord as in servant with his master, as sometimes people were called, but that he's taking the name of God himself. So he takes all these attributes and the character of God himself and subsumes it in himself. And I think probably one of my favorite verses in the Bible in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 21 is, when we think about this Christ, this Yahweh, this remarkable God who becomes flesh, also becomes sin. Therefore, we are ambassadors of Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to

God for our sake. He made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. That remarkable truth that this covenant keeping personal God of the burning bush of the holy ground becomes sin in the person of the son for our salvation. So there is, it's quite good to be to think of the shock factor of that, particularly for the original readers in John's Gospel.

And briefly before we finish, we come to the comfort and we come to the challenge. So the comfort of this revelation of God's name is that he's the great I am. So the God that we worshiped tonight is the God who will be what he will be, was what he was, is what he is, never changes.

[24 : 19] He is the eternal present. And when he says one thing, he's not going to change it. And so it's driving us back to the promises and to the revelation that he gives us in the Bible of himself. He's a covenant keeping God. And as believers, we have the presence of God in our lives. There was presence at the holy place in the burning bush and there is a greater presence for us in the person as we've been looking at of the Holy Spirit. And that covenant keeping God is our God tonight.

And it's important to remember that one or two of the lads here are part of the grace group. And I'll not embarrass them this evening by asking them to memorize or repeat the memory Sam that we're doing. I could do it obviously, but we wouldn't want to show off on such an occasion as this. But Sam 27 begins, you know, the Lord is my light and salvation, the Lord small captals, the Yahweh, Yahweh Lord is because he reveals himself as the saving God and he's David's God and he's David's redeeming God. And it speaks about, and you're going to look at that in the city group, you're going to look at some of the wonderful things that are said in this Sam about the Lord. And it's one of many examples. But one of the things that I really like in this Sam is it speaks about him being the one in verse 5 who lifts me high upon a rock.

He lifts me high upon a rock. This is the Lord. It says lots of things about him, you know, protection and safety and power. But he will hide me in the shelter in the day of his trouble, in the day of trouble. He will conceal me under the cover of his tent. He will lift me high upon a rock. And that's because David knows and understands and grasps his promises. And that's why it's so important for us to know the promises of God because he's unchanging, because he's the I am God. And it's not like he promised to Israel and then he promised to the disciples and they promised to the church in Ephesus. And well, what does he promise me? But it's exactly the same. So we know his promises and we claim them because of who he is. And his covenant promises are brilliant when he says, I will redeem you when we put our trust in him.

That's what he's going to do. We're all going to meet again like this in glory sooner or later because he's made these promises. Our feet are on the rock. We'll be there. You might not think so sometimes. You might wonder what about, but that's a great hope and that's a great future we have.

Time changes nothing. And his, the revelation of his character in New Testament is there to encourage us as well. I just think very briefly in terms of his, the comfort of his I am sayings, which are related to this. When Jesus says I am various things, there's that connection, revelation again of himself. Time will be we'll get all seven New Testament I am's. I am, Jesus said.

[27 : 41] The good shepherd. The bread of life. Light of the world.

I'm the door or the gate. The way the truth in the life. True vine. Yeah. Well, David, the back there. Well done. From beyond the IT comes this rude word.

And I think, did we say resurrection in the life? Anyway, if we didn't, that's seven. And these are his I am promises of his character, revelations, kind of broadening the I am concept of who God is and reminders to us of who he is for us. Covenant promises, covenant revelation. And that's a great comfort.

But it's also a great challenge for us. It's not only a comfort. And I think there's always that balance in Scripture that there's comfort, but there's also challenge. I hope I've got the right reference here. Exodus 34. When Moses takes the new tablets down to the people, he says, the Lord, small caps, descended in the cloud and stood with them there and proclaimed the name of the Lord Yahweh. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love to thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. Comfort. Comfort, really. Comfort from these words. Amazing character. But we can't stop there. But who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children on to the fourth, third and fourth generation. Recognition that God's justice will prevail and that the guilty will not be let off in the great just character of God. And our recognition is that Jesus came in salvation as the great Yahweh, but he will return to take his people and to bring judgment. So when we're looking at doctrine, when we're looking at the nature of

God or the character or the name of God, it should never be boring. It should never be idle chat or mere fireside debate, debating about the fine things of theology. It's life and death.

[30 : 48] Doctrine is life and death. It should interest us because it's revelation of the person of God. And the reminder to us is that in his perfect, unchanging eternal justice, any who die out of Jesus Christ are lost eternally. And so doctrine and the truth of God and the revelation of God should never just be for the shelf. It should never just be to look at and be amazed by.

It should drop us to our knees, both in thankfulness and with a weight and a burden of responsibility to share the mercy of God with those who are lost. And remind ourselves of the fact that we saw on Sunday, try to remember my timing, that we do greater works than Jesus.

In other words, he is anointed us and given us the privilege of being those who cooperate with them in bringing in the kingdom and sharing the gospel and seeing people saved. And that's a great responsibility for us and a great burden and a great challenge. But it drives us to the Yahweh.

It drives us to the one who provides, the one who gives, the one who's the Messiah. We don't take that burden on our shoulder because that would crush us, crush us. But we're just called to be faithful and to be honest and to be open and to be consistent and to be prayerful for the lost and comforted by his intimacy, his friendship. I am with you, he says, and his covenant promises that are ye and amen that never change. So God is Yahweh.