

The Great I Am

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[0 : 0 0] Let the amen sound from his people again. Let us adore you this morning. Thank you that we can do that. Thank you that our hearts can be satisfied in your holiness and in your glory.

Please help us to rejoice in you. Help us to taste and see that you are good this morning. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. So please take your seats for the kiddos. You can head off to children's ministry.

For the benefit of our guests, this morning my name is Dove Cohen, and I'm a pastor here this morning. And our senior pastor, Chris, is in Branson with his wife Angela, so just glad that they could go down and be refreshed this morning.

And I'm just really grateful for the privilege to open up God's word with you all this morning. So today's message is from Exodus 3, 10 to 15.

So if you're going to open up your Bibles or scroll on your phone, it's Exodus 3, 10 to 15. And the name of the message is The Great I Am. The Great I Am. Now the past two months, I've been listening in preparation for this message, listening to and observing a conversation at a burning bush.

[1 : 1 3] On the treadmill at the mechanics of the dining room table, I've just been soaking in and enthralled by this conversation between a shepherd and God, the king of the universe.

The shepherd, Moses, we've already spent time with this year and learned from in our message on Psalm 90 and throughout this series as we're going through Exodus. I appreciate Mike reading Psalm 90.

It's just great to exalt the Lord through that psalm. And growing up Jewish, he's been, God bless you, he's been a monumental figure since childhood and accounted true privilege teaching on this text.

And what we'll see, though, through this text, is that Moses, as faithful and wonder-working as he eventually becomes, wasn't always so faith-filled.

Additionally, we'll see, as we all know, that ultimately the Exodus is not about him and his heroics, but about God. A God who reveals himself through sharing his name in this passage.

[2 : 2 3] And a God who is bent on saving and freeing the people of his choosing to worship and serve him. Now, I've had the privilege with Christine of naming four children so far and one yet to be born.

We've given them names that expressed our prayers for them. Joseph, that he would grow into a man who trusts in God's providence, especially through trials, and that he would be a gracious forgiver.

Gideon, that he would be a mighty warrior for the Lord and that God would do mighty things through him even with limited resources. Bennett, that he'd be a blessing to the Lord and to everyone that he touches.

Madeline, that she would take refuge in God as her strong tower. And finally, baby number five, Annalise Hazel, and Christine's carrying Annalise right now.

That she would trust in God's gracious promise of Christ and know that she is seen by the Lord. Each one of these names has something in common.

[3 : 38] They're all in reference to the Lord dependent upon the Lord and his ultimate existence. As Puritan Matthew Henry said, the greatest and best man of the world must say, by the grace of God, I am what I am.

But God says, absolutely, and is more than any creature, man, or angel can say, I am that I am.

What we'll see this morning in our text is revealing of this glorious truth. God is. We'll see the commissioning of Moses and more importantly, God's glorious and merciful self-revelation, the God who is steadfast in his purposes, resolute to be known and exalted and courage-building in his presence.

We'll explore two major points. Two major points. Who is Moses and who is God? Pretty simple. Two points. And ultimately, my prayer for us this morning is that we would be amazed and stand in awe in awe of a God in heaven yet working through people, men like Moses and people like you and me.

and awe of a God who has been, is, and always will be and a God who since our repentance and faith has been with us through everything and will be with us as the people of God.

[5 : 20] Before we get too far though, let's first read the passage, Exodus 3. I'm going to read from verses 1 to 15 but our focus will be on 10 to 15 this morning. So 1 to 15, Exodus 3, 1 to 15.

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, 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 a 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 while the bush does not burn. When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called out some out of the bush, Moses, Moses.

And he said, here I am. Then he said, do not come near, take your sandals off your feet for the place in which you are standing is holy ground.

[6 : 26] And he said, 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, that 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 also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppressed them. Now our focus, 10 to 15.

Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. But Moses said to God, who am I?

[7 : 38] 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 sent you when you 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, the God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they asked me, what is his name?

What shall I say to them? God said to Moses, I am who I am. And he said, say this to the 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.

This is my name forever and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. May God bless the preaching of his word.

[8 : 53] And now let's begin this morning by setting the scene as we learned last week, Moses has seen and been drawn to a most unusual sight, a bush that was burning yet not consumed.

And God has begun to address Moses calling out to him, instructing him that the ground he is standing on is holy. And God revealing to Moses that he has seen and heard and known the afflictions of the Israelites in Egypt as slaves.

Now this scene is reminiscent of other appearances of the Lord in scripture, appearances like Isaiah 6 where angels surround the Lord and cry out, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of his glory. Daniel 7 where Daniel sees a vision of the Lord and his spirit was anxious and the visions of his head alarmed him.

and even Revelation 1 where John sees the Lord and then falls at his feet as though dead. In Exodus 3 Moses is on holy ground.

[10 : 08] Yet unlike Isaiah, Daniel, and John, Moses and God they speak, they converse. This time Moses encounters God and God relates with him.

he talks with him, even answers him. It's truly amazing. It is this conversation that I want to examine this morning as we consider who is Moses, who is God, and how the presence of God with us makes all the difference in our lives.

So first, who is Moses? There are a number of ways that we can answer that question. Our text reveals Moses himself was wondering that question and even using it as a way to try to get out of God's call on his life.

Look at verses 10 and 11. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt. But Moses said to God, who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?

And bring up this question of who is Moses, Moses himself reveals much, especially where his eyes are fixed at the moment.

[11 : 29] So where is Moses' focus? Well, first, Moses focused on Pharaoh. Moses is intimately familiar with the power and the resources of Egypt's grand ruler.

ruler. He's aware of the organized political regime that stands behind Pharaoh, the army of chariots and horses and soldiers loyal to the self-proclaimed son of God.

And ultimately, Moses is aware of this man, a man of learning and might and commanding rule. So Moses, in considering Pharaoh, well, he's less than courageous.

Second, Moses focused on the children of Israel. roughly 600,000 men alone. A people who are unorganized, oppressed, and not necessarily looking for Moses to come and rescue them.

Remember when Moses kills the Egyptian taskmaster 40 years prior what the Israelites say to him that day or the next day? Who made you a prince and a judge over us?

[12 : 35] Do you mean to kill me as you kill the Egyptian? If that was the Israelite mindset 40 years ago, what would give Moses hope that the children of Israel would rally around him now?

All right, third, Moses' eyes are fixed on himself. Who am I that I should go? Who is Moses in his own mind?

Well, he's a nobody. Yes, Moses was trained in the Egyptian household, the Egyptian palace, and presumably the finest of Egypt's schools.

At 80 years old, though he had no army, no impressive buildings, no court of fawning subjects, his resume and his mind was purely unimpressive, a shepherd alone.

This Moses is quite different from Moses at 40, the self-assured Moses who sought to take action into his own hands, killing that Egyptian taskmaster.

[13 : 45] Moses, at 80, is now a different man, a man ready to see God work, yet he doesn't know it.

And notice how God treats such a person with eyes on circumstances and self. God does not try to pump up Moses' ego to reassure him that he can do what God is calling him to do.

He doesn't remind him of his familial pedigree, his previous schooling, or his accomplishments in Egypt. Rather, what does God say? But I will be with you.

but I will be with you. Where does God point Moses' eyes on himself? Let's come back to that in a second.

I do want to take a minute to highlight that we mustn't overlook the fact that God has been working in Moses' life over the past 40 years. 40 years in backwater Midian, but a faithful and fruitful 40 years.

[14 : 59] While Moses has been out of the loop of the political and cultural and social intrigue of Egypt, God has been training this man. He's learned how to shepherd flocks, an occupation not very different from any of God's faithful servants.

He's learned how to be a father, raising two sons, Eleazar and Gershom. and he's learned how to be a husband, caring for his wife Zipporah, now for 40 years since he rescued her and her sisters from those Midianite shepherds.

From this, I want to draw the fact that God prepared Moses through seemingly ordinary means for extraordinary service.

We, too, must not overlook how God can and is using the circumstances of our lives to prepare us for glorious responsibilities.

Truly, God wastes nothing. God wastes nothing. In the seemingly ordinary roles of our lives, husband, father, shepherd, teacher, cop, lawyer, businessman.

[16 : 22] God is training us for glorious things if we will engage with him, cooperate with him, join him in becoming whatever God wants to make of us through our faithful labors.

Do you feel overlooked by the Lord? Are you toiling in obscurity and in glorious circumstances, composing emails, reviewing documents, driving a forklift, or making meals, teaching kids how to read, disciplining, disciplining, disciplining, two and four and six-year-olds.

We must draw this lesson from the life of Moses. God uses the seemingly ordinary to train us. Again, if we will eagerly cooperate, zealously, passionately dig into the roles he has placed us in, faithful in little, faithful in much, in this life or the next.

Certainly, what glorious things God has in store for his children. But again, remember the primary purpose of these verses, that even in our daily, ordinary godliness, God calls our eyes to look to him.

The most important thing about Moses is not his resume or his circumstances, but it is that God is with him. Like his forefathers before, Abraham, and I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing.

[18 : 05] Isaac, sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your offspring, I will give these lands, all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham, your father.

And Jacob, behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

Like his forefathers before, God is with Moses. God is with Moses.

And that will make all the difference. Who is Moses? He's a man that God is with.

All right, second, who's God? Well, one thing, Moses may have been convinced to end his protesting with the knowledge that God is with him.

[19 : 11] But he doesn't. Rather, he continues to push back at God. Look at verse 13. Then Moses said to God, if I have come to the people of Israel and say to them, the God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they ask me, what is his name?

What shall I say to them? All right, maybe I'm being a little rough on Moses. We'll assume positive intent, and grant this was a genuine question. Either way, God is amazingly gracious and patient with Moses, and in just perfect wisdom provides a glorious answer.

He gives Moses his name. Now, what's in a name? Well, in giving his name, God makes it so that Moses and the people of Israel can know him personally.

God will not be some distant clockmaker who set up the universe and then step back and let it run. Rather, he will be a God that Israel will know and interact with and be blessed by over and over again.

In addition, in God giving Israel his name, Israel, and we by extension, will be able to learn something truly much about God.

[20 : 37] Is there anything greater that we can think about than who is the Lord? So let's consider what we can learn about God from learning his name.

First, look at verses 14 and 15. God said to Moses, I am who I am. And he said, say this to the 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.

This is my name forever and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. There's a lot that we can unpack there.

So first, it seems like God gives Moses two answers to his question regarding God's name. First, I am, and second, the Lord. In Hebrew, this I am who I am, *echya asher echya*, appears to be more of a verb than a noun.

[21 : 47] So while it's included in God's answer to Moses, and while this name suggests God's free existence, we are going to focus on the noun given to Moses. The name the Lord, or in Hebrew, *yud he vav he*, or Yahweh.

Now, personally, I tremble a little in speaking that name. Being brought up Jewish, we were never to speak that name for fear of taking it in vain. Instead, we'd use the Hebrew term *Adonai*, or Lord, as a place keeper for God's proper name.

at the same time, I and we are in Christ. He is our righteousness, and so we can reverently take up the name of God, Yahweh, on our lips, without fear of retribution.

We can, because of Christ, boldly approach the throne of grace, knowing that it is a throne of grace. what a difference Christ makes.

Now, in speaking on this name of God, notice, if you have a Bible, you'll see sometimes the word the Lord, Lord, will be a capital L with three lowercase letters, and sometimes it will show Lord with all uppercase letters.

[23 : 17] So know that when all the letters are uppercase, the Hebrew is yud, hey, vav, hey, or Yahweh. Now, more importantly, what does this name tell us about God, and what does it reveal to Moses?

Well, first, it reveals to us that God is mysterious. Philip Ryken, in his commentary on Exodus, writes that by giving us his name, God, lets us know who he is.

But God's name is so hard to comprehend, so inscrutable, that it forces us to admit that there are some things about God that we will never understand. God is holy.

He is a cut above his creation. God is glorious. God is infinite. In this name, we see that we just cannot understand everything about the Lord.

may we worship. Second, God's name reveals that he is eternal and unchangeable.

[24 : 28] Look at verse 15. This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.

God has always been. He was from eternity past, he is now, and he will forever be God, the Lord. And the Lord, he doesn't change.

He doesn't change in his righteousness. He doesn't change in his justice. He doesn't change in his mercy, his power, his love, his patience, his anger, his glory.

God is unchangeable. May we worship. Finally, God's name reveals that the Lord is self-existent.

Again, Reichen, everything else owes his life and being to God. But God is independent. He does not owe his being or his attributes to anyone else.

[25 : 31] He simply exists all himself. May we worship. And knowing God's name, Moses and the children of Israel were to know that God, the God who is with them and delivering them, he is mysterious, he is eternal, he is unchangeable, and he is self-existent.

This God is utterly unlike Pharaoh, unlike Moses, unlike Israel. And this God will bring the people out of Egypt to serve him on this mountain.

Moses and Israel, they were not to falter, to waver, to hesitate. They truly could be strong and courageous in believing, trusting, obeying the God who simply is.

Alright, so what about us? How does this apply to our lives, our circumstances? What I believe God is calling us to this morning is to consider our future and approach it with courage.

Joe Rigney in his book *Courage, How the Gospel Creates Christian Fortitude*, writes that courage clings to the good in the face of pain or pleasure. Courage resists the impulse to retreat or flee in the face of hardship, difficulty, pain, even death.

[27 : 05] It also refuses to be drawn away from its post by promises of lesser reward. This we call fortitude or endurance.

So what is God calling you to two days, two months, two years out? When you look into the future, do you have any tinge of worry or fear?

What do you anticipate and where are your eyes? Are they on yourself and your circumstances or are they on this God who in Christ knows, sees, hears, and loves you?

Based on the name of God, we can know God is in all of time. Yes, he is here with us this moment and he is there in the future going before us.

Because of who God is in Christ, we can look to the future with eager expectation, with courage, clinging to the good of knowing God will be in it.

[28 : 11] God will lead us and God will be with us. So resisting the impulse to retreat, worry, or flee in the face of hardship or simply the unknown, but instead to press forward into it with faithfulness to the Lord and anticipating God and his grace to meet us in it.

Truly, because God is with us, we can, as the missionary William Carey exclaimed, we can expect great things from God and so attempt great things for God.

Great things like cultivate, a godly marriage, raise zealous children, serve in singleness, build a fruitful church, witness to our neighbors, finish well.

And we can rest in the knowledge that no matter what he calls us to and what we attempt to do to glorify him, we will know and experience and be satisfied by fellowship with the Lord and see his hand at work.

Maybe how we anticipate, maybe not, but always doing abundantly more than all we can ask or think.

[29 : 42] Now the rest of Exodus and the rest of the Bible will be a revealing of God's nature as expressed in his name and the rest of our lives in Christ will be the same.

So may we look to the future to whatever God is calling us with faith and courage knowing that the God who is is with us, his people.

Listen to this final quote from Alexander McLaren. the fire that burns and is not burned out, which has no tendency to destruction in its very energy and is not consumed by its own activity, is surely a symbol of the one being whose being derives its law and its source from itself, who only can say, I am that I am.

the law of his nature, the foundation of his being, the only conditions of his existence being, as it were, enclosed within the limits of his own nature.

You and I have to say, I am that which I become or I am that which I was born or I am that which circumstances have made me. He said, I am that I am.

[31 : 10] All other creatures are links. This is the staple from which they all hang. All other being derived and therefore limited and changeful. This being is underrived, absolute, self-dependent, and therefore unalterable forever.

Because we live, we die. In living, the process is going on in which death is the end, but God lives forevermore, a flame that does not burn out.

Therefore, his resources are inexhaustible, his power unwearied. He needs no rest for recuperation of wasted energy. His gifts diminish not the store which he has to bestow.

He gives and is none the poor. He works and is never weary. He operates unspent. He loves and he loves forever.

And through the ages, the fire burns on, unconsumed, and undecayed. This is your God.

[32 : 24] He loves and he loves forever. In conclusion, this morning, we've been on holy ground listening to a conversation between a shepherd and God almighty.

We've seen that while Moses, with his eyes fixed on himself and his circumstances, Moses was hesitant to obey God's call on his life. However, we've seen God was patient with Moses, lifting his gaze to know that he was with Moses and just who that he is through revealing his name.

The mysterious, eternal, unchangeable, self-existent one. This morning, may we remember that in Christ, God is with us.

That in Christ, in our daily circumstances, God is crafting us to be fruitful, productive, courageous servants in his kingdom. And ultimately, may we worship a God who eternally is.

And so press on into the future with fresh, even daring faith and courage. This conversation at the burning bush, I wish I could say convinced Moses to get up and go in obedience.

[33 : 53] We'll see next week that it will take a bit more convincing. amazing. But for us, we can learn from, be instructed, and be empowered by it to get up and walk out God's call on our lives with courage, looking toward the future with eager anticipation that God will be in it, that God will lead us, and that ultimately, God will be with us.

And is there anything more that we could want? Let's pray. Dear God, we praise you because you are the eternal, unchangeable, mysterious I am.

Lord, we stand in awe of you. We stand in awe of your power and your glory, and we thank you that in Christ we get to experience your mercy and grace.

Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you that it reveals things about you to us so that we can know you and be satisfied in your steadfast love. Lord, I pray that we would stand in awe of you and that the seeds planted is necessary to go deep and help us to walk out your call on our lives, whatever it is, with fresh faith and courage.

I pray it's in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, for communion this morning, let's remember that God, in being the great I am, has revealed himself in the burning bush and has revealed himself to us in flesh in Jesus Christ.

[35 : 36] Over and over again in the Gospel of John, Jesus says, I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world.

I am the door of the sheep. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the good shepherd. I am the way and the truth and the life.

I am the true vine. Ultimately, in John 8, 58, Jesus says, truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.

Jesus left no doubt. He is the great I am. Ehye, asher, ehye, Yahweh.

Jesus is God. And Jesus allowed himself to be scorned, mocked, beaten, and crucified.

[36 : 39] Ultimately, taking our sin, God's curse, God's wrath upon himself, being abandoned by the Father, the great eternal I am.

So he could say to us, and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

He will always be with us. Thank God. So come to the table this morning, freshly grateful, freshly amazed, and freshly in awe of a God, in awe of this God, whose love, like his name, is so great, so mysterious, so eternal, so unchangeable, and may we worship.

1 Corinthians 11, 23, 26. For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, this is my body, which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, also, he took the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

[38 : 03] For as often as you eat this bread, and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Come, let us proclaim the Lord's death together, which secured God with us. the end of the age.