

Exodus: New and Old

Week 1 - God and Jesus as I AM

Leader's Note: This new series is called "Exodus: New and Old." Over the next few weeks, we will look at several key themes in the book of Exodus and how they point to truths that are ultimately revealed in the person of Jesus.

This week we will explore passages from the Old & New Testament to look at the name of God, and particularly why it's important to have a name for Him and to understand what it means.

? When applying for a job, what types of things do you typically put on a resume? Why?

Possible Answer: Desired job outcome, experience, education, references. Need to convince others who don't know you about who you really are (to get a job!).

What does a name tell us, anyway?

Names in the Bible functioned like the resumes of today. Names are not mere labels, but often stand for the character and/or destiny of the bearer.

- Abram becomes Abraham (father of many).
- Jacob is named Israel (God fights) after wrestling with God.
- Moses' name reflects his origin, and perhaps destiny, as one drawn out of water.
- Jesus is so named because He will bring salvation to His people.

Read to the Group: In Exodus 3, God appears to Moses and asks him to lead His people Israel out of slavery in Egypt. But Moses has an objection.

Read out loud: Exodus 3:11-15 (NIV)

¹¹ But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

¹² And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

¹³ Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

¹⁵ God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, '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,

the name you shall call me

from generation to generation.

? When is a name important in our society?

Possible Answer: If it's a name you recognize you may be more inclined to trust a person, or be welcoming to them. We might be more willing to see a movie if our favorite actor is in it.

? Why do you think Moses asks God for His name?

Possible Answer: He wants to know who He's representing and on what authority. Potentially out of fear and uncertainty.

? God answers Moses' question multiple times in His response. Let's look at the answers and identify what God is telling Moses with each response:

1) "I am Who I am."

Possible Answer: He's giving Moses the definitive answer-God is in control, and is self-evident!

2) "Say to the Israelites, '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.'"

Possible Answer: God is giving Moses direction to pass the truth to the Israelites; He is establishing a line of ancestry that shows His connection with the people.

3) "This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation."

Possible Answer: He is getting at the bigger meaning of "I AM" - God was God with their ancestors, and He will still be God for their descendants, forever and ever.

? Why do you think God gives three responses to Moses' question?

Possible Answer: God gives three responses in order to answer the question on a number of different levels. He gives a literal/practical answer of who He is, and then places that answer in a historical and cultural context for the Israelites, as well as connecting it to future generations, foreshadowing the arrival of Jesus.

- What can we learn from the answers God gives?

Possible Answer: We can engage with others on a number of different levels and perspectives.

? How does a name help you trust in that person, particularly if they are telling you something new?

Possible Answer: We might be more inclined to trust someone with a special title (example: PhD) than we would some anonymous source (example: Wikipedia) because we understand that that person has a lot of experience in a particular field.

Read to the Group: After this, God rescues the Israelites from the hands of the Egyptians through a series of miraculous events. The final event was the crossing of the Red Sea, after which the pursuing Egyptians were drowned. Right after these events, Moses sings a song.

Read out loud: Exodus 15:1-3 (NIV)

The Song of Moses and Miriam

¹Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:

"I will sing to the LORD,
for he is highly exalted.

Both horse and driver
he has hurled into the sea.

²"The LORD is my strength and my defense;
he has become my salvation.

He is my God, and I will praise him,
my father's God, and I will exalt him.

³The LORD is a warrior;
the LORD is his name.

?

What do we learn about the name of God from this passage?

Possible Answer: He is highly exalted, He is the true God, He is my Father's God - this is affirming what the Lord revealed about himself in Exodus 3.

Hebrew and Greek 101 - Really, what is God's name?

Ehyeh - I AM

In Exodus 3, God says "I AM who I AM". The Hebrew root word of this statement is ehyeh.

Yahweh - HE IS

In Exodus 15, Moses sings "The LORD is his name." In most English Bibles, "The LORD" in all capital letters is the Hebrew word Yahweh. This is simply a grammatical variation of ehyeh (third-person vs. first-person).

El / Elohim - God (Common Name)

Elohim is the more common term for God in the Bible. Elohim can be used to describe any god (false gods, etc.).

Adonai - The Lord (Hebrew)

In the 1st or 2nd Century AD, Jews started to vocally replace the name "Yahweh" with "Adonai" for two reasons:

1. It was beginning to be believed that Yahweh was too sacred to be uttered.
2. They preferred to simply call Him "Elohim" rather than "Yahweh" to demonstrate to the world that

He is the only true Elohim.

This tradition is still reflected in modern English Bibles, which usually have “The LORD” (in capital letters) in places where the original Hebrew word is Yahweh.

Kyrios - The Lord (Greek)

When the Old Testament (Hebrew) was translated into Greek, Yahweh / Adonai was translated as Kyrios. Paul and the other New Testament writers applied this same word to Jesus.

Read to the Group: In Exodus, God reveals Himself as I AM to Israel and all the nations who are watching. In John 8, Jesus is questioned by the Pharisees about who He really is.

John 8:52-58 (NIV)

⁵² At this they exclaimed, “Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that whoever obeys your word will never taste death. ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?”

⁵⁴ Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. ⁵⁵ Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”

⁵⁷ “You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”

⁵⁸ “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” ⁵⁹ At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.



What claim was Jesus making here?

Possible Answer: He is saying that He is God--He is the I AM of the Old Testament (their Scriptures) and all of those attributes that apply to God as they know Him are also true of Jesus.



Why was this so offensive to the Pharisees?

Possible Answer: They consider this blasphemous--equating anyone/thing with God is a sin. They don't understand the full picture.

For Discussion & Application

- ? How does applying the names of God (e.g. I AM) to Jesus impact your view of Him?
- ? As we already mentioned, names don't typically have the same weight of meaning in our society today. In what ways do you define yourself instead? Why?
- ? Is your character and destiny rooted in God alone or something else?
- ? What is our community application question for these passages?