

Exodus 3:1-17 – What is his name?

It may seem strange to start a series on the “I am” sayings of Jesus in John's gospel with a study in Exodus but we need to come alongside Moses in the wilderness, as God meets with him, to start to grasp the significance of “I am” in Jewish thought. We will see themes in Exodus 3 that foreshadow the greater outworking of those themes in the gospel. The eternal consuming fire of God burns in a scrubby bush and the bush is not consumed but becomes the starting point for the redemption of the people of God. It is in this context of deliverance and promise of a new land, that God reveals himself to Moses as “I am who I am”. This is the God who has seen the affliction, heard the cries so has come down to deliver.

When Moses asked God what he should answer if the people asked the name of the God who had spoken to him, God used the verb “to be” to express his name, he used this form saying, “I AM.” When his people refer to him as Yahweh, which is the third person masculine singular form of the same verb, they say “he is.” Since the third century BC, with the first Greek translation of the Old Testament, there has been the practice of translating Yahweh with “the Lord” (kyrios in Greek). The Greek New Testament used this practice when quoting from the Septuagint as well as calling Christ LORD. When Jesus says, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58, using the Gk. found in Ex. 3:14), the Pharisees show by their desire to stone him that they understood Jesus to be claiming identity with the God who had revealed himself to Moses.¹

The questions are to guide us through the passage. The “consider” questions are designed for discussion about how to apply what we are learning. To “chew over” at the end are thoughts to meditate on during the week following the study.

Open

- Do you know the meaning of your name? Does it have any significance for you?

Study

Read together : Exodus 3:1-17

1. What was Moses doing at the beginning of the chapter? How many times do you think he had done this before? What do you think he felt about himself at this time? (Exodus 3:1 cf Exodus 2:15,21-23 Acts 7:30)

¹ Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (149). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

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2. What attracted Moses' attention? Why do you think God chose this way to appear to him? (Exodus 3:2-4, cf Deut 4:24, 9:3)

Consider

3. The Burning Bush is a visual metaphor which works at several levels discuss how this metaphor works for Moses, Israel, Jesus, the Church. What does it mean for you personally?
4. Why did Moses have to remove his sandals and why was he afraid to look? (Exodus 3:5-6)

Consider

5. Moses was told not to come any closer (Exodus 3:5) but we are told to approach with confidence (Heb 4:16). Why? (see also Eph 3:12, Heb 7:19)
6. Read the words of God to Moses, how does he describe himself? What is he about to do and why? (Exodus 3:6-10 cf Luke 20:37)
7. "I have seen ...I have heard their cry ...I know ...I have come down." What does this tell us about God? In what way has God "come down" in Exodus? How can these words be applied to Jesus in a greater way? (Exodus 3:10-12, Hebrews 3:1-6)

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Consider

8. Moses said, “Who am I, that I should go..”, God said, “But I will be with you.” What is more important your ability or the fact that God is with you? What difference does that make to the way you live and what you expect?

9. “What is his name?” What does God's answer tell us about God's nature? (Exodus 3:13-15 cf Isaiah 43:10-11, 44:6, 45:5-7)

To chew over until the next study:

Who we are is not important; that God is with us is important, for without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5).²

God’s presence puts an honour upon the worthless, wisdom and strength into the weak and foolish, makes the greatest difficulties dwindle to nothing, and is enough to answer all objections.³

Jesus said, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt 28:20)

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's expository outlines on the Old Testament* (Ex 3:11–4:17). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Henry, M. (1996). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible : Complete and unabridged in one volume* (Ex 3:11–15). Peabody: Hendrickson.