

**"I Am Who I Am"****THE STORY (EXODUS 3:1-15)****Moses encounters God...(vss. 1-6)**

- Moses' life was neatly divided into 40-year segments (40 – 40 – 40).
- For 40 years Moses was a prince in Egypt and learned about being leadership from the Egyptians...
- ...As we learned last week his 40 years as prince in Egypt came to an abrupt end when he tried to assert his own authority as Israel's deliverer by killing an Egyptian taskmaster.
- Moses then spent 40 years in the wilderness as a shepherd caring for his father-in-law's sheep...with lots of time to think and lots of time to learn about leadership ...this time from God. At about 80 years of age this second segment of 40 years was now coming to a close...

*"Now Moses had been keeping the flock of his father 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."*

- The long quiet day of keeping sheep was about to change.
- God personally enters the scene of human history for apparently the first time in several hundred years...

*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."*

- Now notice what Moses does...this is an important point that we will be coming back to later.

*And Moses said, 'I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.' When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses.' And he said, 'Hear I am.' Then he said, 'Do not come near, take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' 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."*

- Safe to say that God had Moses' attention...God then tells Moses his intentions.

**God states his intentions... (vss. 7-12)**

*"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 that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, 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 oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.'*

**Moses anticipates a major problem ...(vs. 13)**

*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 ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?"*

- Picture it...the people of Israel had been enslaved in Egypt for several hundred years under Egyptian polytheism (many gods). And the longer they were enslaved in Egypt the more Egyptianized they became. And the longer they were enslaved in Egypt the more distant became the memory of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Perhaps to some the God of Abraham had become a legend, or in some circles perhaps even a fable or fairytale that had been passed on through the oral tradition of their fathers. For all they knew, this God appeared to a few men named Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob several hundred years ago, and he made a few promises about a children, and land, and becoming great nation, and then left the scene of history.
- So Moses' question is a pivotal one; he has two obstacles that he needs to overcome if the people of Israel are to leave Egypt: one is Pharaoh and the other is the people of Israel themselves... It is curious that the first obstacle that Moses mentions is not Pharaoh but the people of Israel. Moses believed (probably because of his past experience) that the people of Israel would resist his leadership. So, Moses wants to know what he should tell the people of Israel about this God that would convince them that they should actually get up and follow him out of Egypt.
- What the people of Israel would really want to know was who is this God is and what is he like?
- Moses understands that the people of Israel are going to want to know what the name of this God is.

## God gives his answer...(vss. 14-15)

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" "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."

- How would the Israelites, who had been enslaved in Egypt for several hundred years, understand this? "I AM WHO I AM." I AM...I AM what?
- A name is supposed to bring clarity, but in many ways, at least for me, this name increases confusion. When we introduce ourselves we say, "Hi, my name is..."
- God could have said I am El-shaddai (almighty), I am Elohim (creator), I am Jireh (provider), I AM Adonai (sovereign)...and they all would have been true...but he didn't he just said "I AM".

## WHAT TO KNOW

### "I AM" is a clear statement that the LORD exists.

- "I AM" is a verb that comes from the Hebrew word "hayah" meaning "to exist". Therefore "I AM" is literally and plainly a statement of God's eternal existence. **I AM = I exist.**
- In those days, the Hebrew language was written with no vowels. Of course, vowels would be added in order to pronounce the word.
- Therefore, **I AM = I exist = YAHWEH.**
- Modern Bible translators indicate the name Yahweh by writing the word LORD in capitals. So when you see LORD it is this name for God, **I AM = I exist = YAHWEH = LORD.** So when I use the term LORD through out this message I am always using it in this sense, I AM, I exist, YAHWEH. Not Lord – Adonai.
- One of the primary things that God wanted the people of Israel to know, one of the things that would convince them to follow Moses out of Egypt, was that He existed. God told Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"
- But what does it mean to know the God who exists?

### (a) To know the LORD as I AM is to know him as the creator of all that exists...including you!

Isaiah 42:5-8 Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: "I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. **I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.**

- Everything you see (everything that exists) owes its existence to the LORD. And the LORD created every single person who ever was and ever is and ever will be. Ponder that...The Lord created Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the people of Israel...and Pharaoh and the taskmasters.
- By reason of his creatorship he owns everything that exists.
- The LORD created and owns you, and me, and our fathers...and Steven Harper, and Barak Obama and all those who sit in their lofty places and pretend to "control the world."
- But know this, our God is the LORD; that is His name; His glory He will not give to another, nor His praise to carved idols!
- Summarize (a)

### (b) To know the LORD as I AM is to know him as the one who owns you -- doubly!

"I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt..."

- When God came to Moses in the burning bush and made this statement he differentiated between his ownership of the Egyptians and his ownership of the people of Israel.
- He owned them both, but his ownership of the people of Israel was different...

Deuteronomy 7:7-8 "It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, **but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers,** that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and **redeemed you** from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

- God owned the Egyptians and the people of Israel by way of creation.
- But God owned the people of Israel in a much more significant way...by redemption!
- Redemption requires affection in the eyes of the person who is doing the redeeming (he loves you...he is keeping his oath).

**(c) To know the LORD as I AM is know him as the one true God!**

**Isaiah 45:18** For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): **'I am the LORD, and there is no other.'**

- This is I AM, and this is the one that Moses was to say to the people of Israel had sent him. Remember, at this point in history the Israelites, to varying degrees, had been indoctrinated in Egyptian polytheism and had many gods. But now, the one true God had come to them and said I have seen...I have heard...I know...and I have come.
- Specifically he has identified himself as, **"The LORD, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."** The LORD exists specifically as the God who appeared and made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (promises about many children, about a good land, and becoming a great nation)...Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.
- The LORD's pleasure was upon Abraham because he responded in faith to the promises of God. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and all who believe on him.

**Hebrews 11:6** And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that **he exists** and that **he rewards** those who seek him.

This may seem intolerant to some, to say that the Christian God is the only true God. But it is only intolerant if it is not true. If it is true, then my telling you this truth is the greatest gift you could ever receive!

- Summarize (c). Moses stood before the burning bush and asked God a pertinent question, "If I go to the people of Israel to bring them out of Egypt and they ask me who you are, what your name is, what shall I say to them? And God said, "I AM", the one true God, the creator and owner of all and the redeemer of my people.

**WHAT TO DO** with the fact that the LORD exists as the one true God and creator of all:

**a) Strive to grasp the reality of the LORD's existence more deeply.**

- The primary thing that God wanted the people of Israel to know, the thing that would convince them that they should follow Moses out of Egypt is that the God, the one true God of their fathers, really does exist!
- Remember, this story is allegorical...it has a hidden meaning for us today. One of the primary things we need to do if we are to get out of slavery to the world (Egypt) and into living the Christian life (Canaan) is to grasp the reality of the LORD's existence more deeply.
- The battlefield in the Christian life is the heart and the mind.
- The battle is won or lost in your heart and in your mind.
- That is why the entire message of the gospel can be distilled down to this one sentence..."**believe** upon the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."
- There is a spectrum of belief and every one of us falls somewhere on that spectrum.
- I don't mean that you can kinda believe which is like kinda being pregnant. You either believe or you don't.
- What I do mean is that we can believe in such a way that it affects some areas of our life but not every area of our life.
- So, the LORD can be peripheral in our lives or increasingly central. The goal is to grasp the reality of the LORD's existence so deeply that he becomes less peripheral and increasingly central!
- How do we do this? How do we grasp the reality of the Lord's existence more deeply?
- Take the example of Moses... I said I would return to this point later, so here we are...lets learn from Moses.

**Exodus 3:2-4** *"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, why the bush is not burned.' When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses'..."*

- Notice what Moses did when he was confronted with the burning bush... He turned aside to see it...and it wasn't until then that the LORD spoke to him.
- How many of you would have turned aside from your busy day to wonder at the miracle of the burning bush?
- Take time to wonder.
- Summarize (1). We need to strive to grasp the reality of the Lord's existence more deeply.
- Challenge. The LORD is revealing himself to you every day! The next thing the Lord brings into your life turn aside to wonder.

### The Atheist and Agnostic in the crowd...

- I said that there is a spectrum of belief. Obviously one end of the spectrum is “unbelief.”
- **Agnostic**...holds that the existence of God, and the essential nature of things are unknown and unknowable.
- **Atheist** (comes from the Greek word meaning “godless”). They deny the existence of God or a supreme being...Gordon Stein in his debate with Christian apologist Greg Bahnsen clarified that his atheistic beliefs come from the belief that there is *insufficient evidence* to conclude that there is a God.
- Either way, the stated problem for the agnostic and for the atheist is a problem of evidence.
- Story of an agnostic...7days @ 12 hrs a day = 84 hrs...I just need proof. What proof are you looking for?

**Psalm 19:1** “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

- You are confronted every day with more than adequate knowledge of God’s existence to believe!
- Knowledge from the Hubble telescope... [\[Slides from Hubble here\]](#)

**Rom 1:18-20** “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness **suppress the truth**. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. **For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.**”

- So I ask you again...what proof are you looking for? What will convince you of God’s existence? There is enough evidence in the created order for all the convincing you need of God’s existence...only stop suppressing it.
- In my conversations with atheists and agnostics, it seems to me that the problem of God’s existence is really just a façade. As I hear them talk, it seems to me that the greater problems, the ones they get emotional about, are the problem of pain (if God exists then how can there be so much pain...especially my pain...if only you knew what I have seen, if only you had been through what I have been through), or the problem of what they will be required to give up (but I like my life the way it is!)
- But you have put the cart before the horse...Acknowledgment of the LORD’s existence comes first...
- It would be better for you to go through life blind than to see all the stary hosts of heaven with your eyes and reject the LORD who made them all!

### b) **Strive to enslave yourself to the LORD more fully.**

- Right now, if you belong to the LORD, whatever your circumstances are, the LORD is actively working through them to get you out of slavery to the world and into slavery to the LORD which is the ultimate form of freedom, the Christian life.
- And one of the ways he is doing this is by bringing you face to face with the reality that He alone is God. He created you, he owns you, and, if he has redeemed you, he owns you twice.
- So, submit yourself to whatever the LORD is doing in your life!

**Heb 12:6-9** “For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” It is for discipline that you have **to endure** (hupomeno□). God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

*If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be **subject** (hupotasso)□ to the Father of spirits and live?”*

- Get under and wait. (stay under).
- We are always so anxious to get out from under.
- But the first thing we need to do is to get under, submit to and receive God’s discipline.
- Sometimes that means physically getting down on our face before God and saying God you are the LORD, I am not. I receive your discipline. Do as you please...only take me out of Egypt!
- Don’t fight your pain...receive it.
- Challenge. What discipline has the LORD brought into your life? Fall on your face before God, accept his discipline, get under it and wait. If you lack wisdom as to how to get under the LORD’s discipline seek godly counsel

**Closing remarks...**