

The Great I Am

Exodus 3:1-15

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Intro

Genesis is a book of beginnings. We learned that God created the heavens and the earth. We learn of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's walk with God. And as Genesis comes to a close, we see Israel going to Egypt, 70 people in all, as God preserves them as a nation and provides for them during a terrible 7 year famine.

Exodus is a book of redemption, a way out. At this point, Israel has been in Egypt now more than 400 years and they have grown from 70 to over 2 million people. The favor from Pharaoh they had at the beginning of their arrival in Egypt ended with the death of that Pharaoh. As other Pharaohs took the throne, they began to be afraid of how great of a nation Israel was becoming, so they enslaved them and made life difficult for them. But the more Israel suffered the more they grew in number.

God then brings our attention to Moses, whom God had chosen to deliver the nation from the bondage of their slavery. Moses was a miracle baby. Pharaoh had ordered every son who was born to be thrown into the Nile, but Moses' parents hid him in a wicker basket and set him afloat on the Nile River to the mercy of God. Pharaoh's daughter found the baby and decided to raise him as her own. So Moses was raised in Pharaoh's home. When Moses had grown up, he saw the hard labor of the Hebrews and one day saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew. So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

But the matter became known and when Pharaoh heard of it he tried to kill Moses, so Moses fled into the desert and settled in the land of Midian. There he became a shepherd and stayed in the desert 40 years.

It is at this point that Moses has an encounter with God. In this encounter there is so much insight for our own lives.

I. Let God be the Fire in Your Heart

- It's interesting that God appears to Moses in a blazing fire. The bush was burning with fire, but was not consumed. This got Moses' attention, but I believe there's a message in it as well.
- Sometimes I see people who are bored with life. We are not meant to be bored, we are meant to be filled with the fire of godly passion.

A. God is a non-consuming fire

- When Israel was being led through the desert after they left Egypt, God used a pillar of fire to represent his presence among them.
- God's presence in our lives can be represented by a fire that burns within us.

App – the fire that burns within us can be seen as the passion within our hearts. Many people are filled with worldly passions, but when the Holy Spirit fills the heart we have a new passion that burns within our soul.

- You might know that there is a powerful scripture that says that God is a consuming fire. It's found in several places in scripture.

Hebrews 12:28-29, Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.

- Therefore God is both a consuming fire and a non-consuming fire.

- In the same way that the bush was not consumed, we are not consumed by the fire of God; rather we are filled with a fire that ignites. God fills our lives with a passion for Him.
- If someone is feeling burned up or burned out, that's not God.

B. The fire of God does consume some things

- God is also a consuming fire as in the scriptures.
- If God's presence can be seen as a fire that burns within, we must also understand that the fire of God will consume certain things in our lives.
- We need to be careful to discern what this means. Paul makes the distinction clear in his first letter to the Corinthians.

I Corinthians 3:10-16 Everything will be tried by fire

- In other words, the things which are eternal in our lives will remain. That which God is doing is certainly eternal. God is building his character into our lives; that is eternal.
- But those things which are temporal or worldly, those things are consumed when the passion of God, the fire of God, burns within our soul.
- This is actually a key to spiritual victory and spiritual power in our lives. Many people do not experience the power of God in their lives because they have not understood the importance of their desires.

**Illus – “So turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.”**

- There is another scripture that gives great insight in the book of Isaiah which tells us that we must be very careful not to “light our own fire.”
- In fact, and this is extremely important to understand, that the passions of the world are also consuming fires. *They cause people to burn out.*
- If you’re burning up with anger, that’s not God.

Isaiah 9:18, For wickedness burns like a fire;

James 3:6, And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.

II. Practice the Presence of God

- Moses is fascinated by this marvelous sight, why the bush was not burned up, so he approaches and then hears God call to him from the midst of the bush.
- It is here that Moses had an amazing encounter with God. It is also here that, for the first time in the Bible, we learn the name of God.
- When Moses asked God’s name, God responded by saying, “I am, that is my name.”

Illus – the problem was that there were more than 115 gods and goddesses in Egypt, many in animal form. One even had the head of a bee and the body of a hippopotamus.

Illus – When I was in Russia, we had an outreach and a man came in from the snowy street wearing only a white robe and had bare feet who said that he was God. I asked him his name and he said, “The action.” I said, “No, God’s name is ‘I am.’”

- God’s name is translated “I am,” but literally means, “all that I am I will be to you.”

A. All that God is, He is to you

- YHWH is called the tetragrammaton. We say this as Yahweh, though no one really knows how to say God’s name. Some have taken the vowels from ‘Lord’ (adonai) and placed them into the four letters to make the name Jehovah, but that is not right either.
- The point is that this is God’s name. It’s very personal. **God** is a title, but **YHWH** is his name. We can refer to him by both title and name, but his name is most personal.

Illus – When someone calls out “Rich” even over an intercom in a store or hospital I perk up. When someone says, “dad” all the dads present perk up.

- “I am” also refers to the fact that God is eternal, there is no beginning and no end and he is outside of time.

Illus – Isaac Newton believed that space and time were absolute, but with Einstein came a revolution of thought that time and space are relative. In fact, we know today that the atomic clocks aboard the space shuttle run slower than the atomic clocks on earth.

- Jesus shocked the Jews of his day when he claimed to be outside of time.

John 8:57-59, So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

- God’s name also reveals His nature. “All that I am I will be to you,” His nature and character are applied to our lives as well.

Illus – When we pray in Jesus’ name, we are to pray consistent with his name, His nature.

We shouldn’t pray, “I’m really angry with so and so, Lord, make him have a really bad day – in Jesus’ name.”

- **In fact, in Matthew 5:44. Jesus said, “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;”**

App – Jesus said, “I am” in many ways and they all apply to our lives.

I am the Living Water...

I am the Bread of Life...

I am the Light of the World...

I am the Good Shepherd...

I am the True Vine...

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life...

- When Phillip asked Jesus to show them the Father, Jesus replied...

John 14:7-9 He who has seen me has seen the Father

B. It's who God is that matters

- Moses is then told by YHWH that he has seen the affliction of the Hebrews and he has heard their cry, and that he knows of their suffering.
- In other words, God sees, God hears and God knows what is happening in our lives.
- God then told Moses that He was going to send him to Pharaoh so that he would lead the people.
- “Who am I?” Moses replied. Moses was probably very pleased to hear that God saw the affliction of the people, but not pleased at all to hear that God wanted him to go.
- What an interesting contrast – Moses appeals to God that he is a nobody and then God told Moses that He was everything.

App – It's not who you are, but who God is that really matters in this life. “It's not who you are Moses, it's who that is with you that matters.”

Matthew 28:19-20, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

**App – He’s not the Great “I Give,” He is the Great “I am.”
It’s not *something* we need; it’s *someone* that we need.**

- Some people ask, “Which way do I go?” God doesn’t just give directions; He gives the one who is The Way.

God wants to use you as well

- Maybe you know someone in bondage; and God wants to send you. “Who am I?” you might say, yet God not only knows who you are, He knows what difference He can make in your life as well.