

Vs. 14-15 God's name?

God answers Moses' question in vs. 13 with what is a play on words; "I am" and "I will be" are the same in Hebrew. "I will be with you" is God's promise in vs. 12. From the repetition of "I AM" comes the name "Yahweh" or "Jehovah" which the English translators write as LORD in our Bibles. Some commentators see the statement "I am who I am" or "I will be who I will be" best understood as "What does it matter who I am?", as if God will should be well known to His people and no asking necessary. God gives not so much a name as an assertion the one speaking is the God of the ancestors. If there is a name it follows in: "I AM has sent you". God's name is known in relation to his creative power, his covenant promise and his saving love and grace; in the past, now & to come. Israel must commemorate this knowledge always (vs 15).

EXERCISE Consider the significance of God's name in the following passages:
Numbers 6.26; Deuteronomy 12.5,11; 16.2-6; Psalm 8.1; 74.7; Amos 5.8; 9.5-6; Jeremiah 33.2

Believing in God's presence

The task given to Moses was not one to be undertaken alone. Firstly, Moses *and the elders* were to confront Pharaoh (3:18). Secondly, at a later time Aaron was appointed as an assistant to compensate for Moses' great flaws (4:16). Moses would have to learn this lesson many times (e.g. 18: 17,18). More significantly though, Moses is to understand that the God who was with his ancestors, is. Yahweh truly exists. Yahweh is, and will be! This name is emphasised in chapters 19-20 and 33-34 where God's presence is so necessary (e.g. 33:14). What follows our passage in Exodus will be successive tests of the veracity of God's 'name'. The reader is to ask, "is God present in the circumstances of Israel?"... in our lives?

Q.14 What are the circumstances of life when you are **most confident** God is present with you? ... the church? Do your answers bear resemblance to the stories in Exodus?

Q.15 For Christians there are 3 very significant foundations for our confidence that God is present with us: i) The witness of Scripture (revelation), ii) the event of the death & resurrection of Christ (history), and iii) the witness of the Holy Spirit (experience). Do you see parallels in the Exodus accounts? Which of these 3 most helps you to believe in God's presence? Why?

#2 What's in a Name Exodus 3:1-15

Exod 3:5-6 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

The God of Freedom



Moses had made his escape from Egypt after committing murder to save a fellow Israelite and thinking himself "found out" by the general population and knowing that he must have been a wanted man.

Travelling East, Moses settled in Midian (near modern day Saudi Arabia). There he married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, the priest of Midian and had a child to her. Marrying into the family gave Moses work as a shepherd to Jethro's flock. This common task is none-the-less an indicator of the drama to come and greater role Moses will be called to. The amazing phenomenon in the burning bush is no doubt also to be held alongside greater miracles of nature yet to unfold in the story. Exodus 3:1-4:17 as a whole should be considered to fully appreciate the meaning of this passage in what is often referred to as the "call of Moses".

Warm Up

Q.1 Do you know the meaning behind your first name or your surname? Share it with others. Does the meaning bear any resemblance to you?

Q.2 What do you think of when you hear the following names mentioned? Discuss in your group: Florence Nightingale, Mother Theresa of Calcutta, Martin Luther King, Michael Jackson, Margaret Thatcher, Gough Whitlam, Jack The Ripper, Ghandi, Madonna.

Getting into the Text Exodus 3:1-15

Exod 3:1 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.



It's no surprise that we should find Moses in the desert and near the Mountain that is also called Sinai. Both these locations are to feature strongly in the drama ahead. The one who is to shepherd God's people to safety comes to the place where God makes himself known. God has heard the cry of his people in slavery (2:24; 3:7) and initiates a plan which includes Moses.

Vs. 2 - 6 God revealed in burning bush

Q.3 What difference is there between the 'messenger' and 'the LORD' in the rest of the passage from verse 4?



Q.4 The bush 'did not burn up' (vs. 2). Bushes normally are consumed when alight. So too, rivers don't normally turn to blood, frogs don't invade the land and seas do not form walls of water. What might Moses have been expected to think about the identity of this voice in the bush (and the one who would act through the plagues and mighty exodus in the future)?

Q.5 What does the image of fire indicate about God in this and other encounters? (e.g. Exod. 13:21; 19:18; 24:17; Ezek. 1:27; 8:2)

Q.6 Who initiates the encounter? (see vs. 4)

Q.7 What begins as a moment of curiosity soon becomes an occasion of fear and strangeness. What do you make of the prohibition not to come any closer, the command to take off one's sandals and the action of Moses in hiding his face? (vss. 5 & 6)

Q.8 The emphasis in verse 6 is on the "I am". The voice is saying "I am the one you have heard about in the past." What might Moses have already known about God at this point? What has the book of Genesis already revealed to the reader about this God?

ACTIVITY

Watch chapter 15 of the DVD "Prince of Egypt" from Disney - Moses encounters the voice of God in the burning bush.

Vs. 8 - 9 God to the rescue

Q.9 Note how the language of verse 7 is similar to 2:24-25. What do these verses tell us about our God?

Q.10 The place God will lead his rescued people to is called a land of 'milk and honey'. Some commentators believe these to have been considered divine sustenance in ancient times, and thus there is a reference to paradise. How might this idea connect to the Genesis creation accounts and the rest of the Bible?

Vs. 10-13 God appoints a deliverer

Q.11 Note that God chooses an outcast (2:22) for the task. But just who will do the rescuing (compare vs 10 and vs 8, consider vs. 12, 4:16 and Genesis 46:3-4)? What other situations in the bible can you think of that have similarities to this circumstance (e.g. Gideon, Samuel, Ezekiel)? How do the unlikely circumstances of Moses remind us of those of Jesus of Nazareth?

Q.12 Far from celebrating the news in vs 10, Moses questions God's wisdom several times. What failings and inadequacies did Moses have in view to doubt God's plan so? What 'credentials' does God seem to look for in people when there's jobs to be done?

EXERCISE God offers signs that he will be with his people. Check out these examples in Exodus:
4.8,9,17,28,30; 7.3,5; 8.16-19;
10.1; 12.13; 13.9,16; 31.13,17