

Lesson 22 - THE NAME ABOVE EVERY NAME Exodus 3:13-15

(Exod. 3:13) - The LORD God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush. This was none other than God manifest in the LORD Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah. The LORD God commissioned Moses to deliver His covenant people (Israel) from Egyptian bondage and to be mediator between Him and the people. Moses asked the question, *“Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them?”* It may seem strange that they would ask, *“What is His name?”* Would they not recognize His name in *“The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you”*? We are not certain of the implications of this, but we know that they had been in bondage in Egypt for about 400 years. It may have been that they had forgotten the God of their fathers. This kind of sinfulness was prevalent throughout the history of the nation Israel. Consider how many so-called churches today had a good beginning in the truth but have gradually fallen away into false gospels and false doctrine (cf. 2 Thess. 2:3). Notice also that Moses did use one of the names of God, which is *“Eloheem,”* meaning *“God Almighty.”* This is the plural name of God indicating the Holy Trinity - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, not three gods, but ONE GOD in three Persons working mightily, for example, in the creation (cf. Gen. 1:1). But as Moses had been absent for forty years, the people would want to know the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses.

(Exod. 3:14) - *“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you”* - To understand this, we must know that a name is much more than a mere label for God. It is an expression of His whole being and nature, and this is what the word *“Yaweh”* (originally *“YHWH”*) means. This name affirms the divine SELF-EXISTENCE, ETERNALITY, and IMMUTABILITY of God, and that is the basis of who He is and what He does. There is only one self-existent being in the universe and that being is God. He is the only person who has His existence from Himself. Every one of us has our existence from Him. The whole creation has its existence from Him while He does not have anyone from whom He exists. He is the self-existent God. It is also important because it affirms His faithfulness that flows out of who He is. Because He is self-existent, eternal, and immutable, He is faithful to His promises, and He can keep them all. Not only can God keep them all, but He has determined that He will keep them all. He has assured this by His own glory (Heb. 6:17-20).

(Exod. 3:15) - God then told Moses to proclaim His covenant name - *“The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is My name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations.”* This is God’s name in relation to His covenant people and His promises to them. Physically and temporally, this applies only to the nation Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham, and to the physical promises God made to them through Abraham, especially His promises of a land flowing with milk and honey and their preservation as a nation until the Messiah would come according to the flesh. Spiritually and eternally, this applies only to the spiritual nation of Israel, God’s elect whom He chose in Christ before the foundation of the world. This spiritual nation is made up of sinners saved by grace (Jew and Gentile) who are justified in God’s sight based on Christ’s righteousness imputed to them. They are all for whom Christ died and arose again and whom God the Holy Spirit gives spiritual life and brings to faith in Christ, true repentance, and perseverance in the faith. They are all who will be brought to eternal glory by the grace and power of God in Christ Jesus (John 6:37-45; Rom. 5:21; 6:23).

The full significance of the name, "I AM who I AM," is seen only in Jesus Christ in its fullest sense. God the Father has "*highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name*" (Php. 2:9). "*JESUS*" means "Jehovah saves" or "Jehovah IS salvation" (Php. 2:10; Matt. 1:21). This could only be said of one who IS God, even the great "*I AM.*" His exaltation applies to His glorious Person as God manifest in the flesh (Matt. 1:23) and one in whom "*dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*" (Col. 2:9; cf. 1:19). It also applies to the accomplishment of the redemption of His people as their Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Preserver (Php. 2:5-11). God's glory is invested in the Lord Jesus Christ by Whom all the promises of God are sure and certain (2 Cor. 4:6; 5:19). It is through the Person and finished work of Christ that God reveals Himself to His covenant people in every attribute of His nature and work.

Christ claimed this name for Himself, and it would have been blasphemy for a mere man to claim this of himself. When He confronted the Pharisees who rejected Him but claimed Abraham as their father, He said, "*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad*" (John 8:56). They objected, "*Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?*" (John 8:57). He answered, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM*" (John 8:58). When the Roman soldiers, led by Judas, came to arrest Him, He asked them, "*Whom seek ye?*" They answered, "*Jesus of Nazareth.*" In the AKJV, it is recorded that He answered, "*I am he,*" but "*he*" was not in the original manuscripts. It was originally written that He answered, "*I AM, and they went backward, and fell to the ground.*" This is all written in John 18:1-9.

In the Gospel of John, it is recorded that Jesus spoke several "I AM" statements that could only apply to one who is God. He said, "*I AM the Bread of life*" (John 6:35,48,51); "*I AM the Light of the world*" (John 8:12; 9:5); "*I AM the Good Shepard*" (John 10:11,14); "*I AM the resurrection and the life*" (John 11:25); "*I AM the way, the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6); "*I AM the true vine*" (John 15:1). And in fact, this use of the term "I AM" is designed by our Lord to cause those who are familiar with Scriptural things to make the connection, that He is the one who spoke with Moses out of the burning bush, who spoke to the fathers, spoke to the prophets, has spoken through John the Baptist and now speaks Himself through His ministry on the Earth.

Another very significant verse in John's Gospel is where Christ said to religious unbelievers, "*Ye are from beneath; I AM from above: ye are of this world; I AM not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I AM [he' is in italics], ye shall die in your sins*" (John 8:23-24). Hebrews 11:6 states, "*But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that HE IS, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.*" This is more than simply believing that "there is a god" or that "God really exists." It is God-given faith that brings sinners to believe that GOD IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS according to His revealed Word. The problem with all false religion (even false Christianity) is that it allows people to think of God as they think of themselves and not as He is and as He reveals Himself to be (Psalm 50:21).

For example, in Isaiah 45:21, the LORD God reveals Himself as "*a just God and a Savior,*" and He commands His people to "*look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else*" (Isa. 45:22). The Gospel of God's grace in salvation for sinners is the revelation of "*the righteousness OF GOD*" (Rom. 1:16-17), and this is the merit of Christ (Who is God in human flesh without sin) as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people, imputed to them and received by them in God-given faith. This is the basis upon which God is reconciled to sinners, and sinners are reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:19-21). This is how the great I AM reveals Himself to His people in grace that reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord.