

Jehovah/Yahweh

While standing near the temple Jesus spoke to the people of the unique relationship He had with the Father. Many responded by wanting to become disciples and learn more. Speaking to those who believed in Him, He held out to them the way by which they could become the children of God. On the other hand, disbelieving Jews disputed this claim, saying that they would forever be children of Abraham.

Jesus responds, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad." (John 8:56)

His critics scoffed saying, "You aren't even 50 years old and you say you saw Abraham." (John 8:57)

His next response shocks the crowd of unbelievers and sends them, into a frenzy of rage. He looks at them and says, Truly, Truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." (John 8:58)

The Jews immediately picked up stones to stone Him on the spot. Why? Because He used the "unspeakable" name of God, and He applied it to Himself.

Of all the names of God we will discuss, this one is the most comprehensive. It is also the one God gave Himself. The Hebrew word is Yahweh. It comes from Exodus 3:14. Moses is worried that after so many years of living in Egypt with a multitude of gods around, that the people will not believe in a purely spiritual, unnamed God. Therefore, he asks, "When the people ask me what your name is, what I shall tell them." Exodus 3:13)

God replies, "I AM who I AM. Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, "I AM has sent me to you." (Exodus 3:14)

God's basic message to His people at that moment was for them simply to know that He exists. I find this a very comforting thought. The first thing God wants me to know as His child is that He exists. When my existence seems to be hanging by a thread, He exists. When it seems like my whole carefully ordered world comes crashing in on me, He exists. He is, and because He is, I can have confidence beyond my own fragile and perilous existence.

Not only is God saying that He exists, but He is also saying He is self-existent. Think about that for a moment. In the entire universe, who or what can make that claim except God. All the rest of us are derivative beings. I was produced by the union of my mother and my father. They were given birth by their parents and so forth. Even Adam cannot claim self-existence since God created him from the dust of the ground. For His own pleasure God created the earth, planets, stars and galaxies. God made all the heavenly beings; even Satan and his minions cannot claim self-existence. God made them, too. God alone can say, "I AM" without saying "I Became." What a humbling

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reality for us humans who can only say "I Became"! We are dependent on the Self-existent One for our very being, not only our origin but also our continued existence.

Consider this quote from A.W. Tozer's *The Knowledge of the Holy*:

The natural man is a sinner because and only because he challenges God's selfhood in relation to his own. In all else he may willingly accept the sovereignty of God; in his own life he rejects it. For him, God's dominion ends where his begins. For him, self becomes Self, and in this he unconsciously imitates Lucifer, that fallen son of the morning who said in his heart, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the Most High."

Yet so subtle is self that scarcely anyone is conscious of its presence. Because man is born a rebel, he is unaware that he is one. His constant assertion of self, as far as he thinks of it at all, appears to him a perfectly normal thing. He is willing to share himself, sometimes even to sacrifice himself for a desired end, but never to dethrone himself. No matter how far down the scale of social acceptance he may slide, he is still in his own eyes a king on a throne, and no one, not even God, can take that throne from him.

Sin has many manifestations but its essence is one. A moral being, created to worship before the throne of God, sits on the throne of his own selfhood and from that elevated position declares, "I AM." That is sin in its concentrated essence; yet because it is natural it appears to be good. It is only when in the gospel the soul is brought before the face of the Most High One without the protective shield of ignorance that the frightful moral incongruity is brought home to the conscience. In the language of evangelism the man who is thus confronted by the fiery presence of Almighty God is said to be under conviction. Christ referred to this when He said of the Spirit whom He would send to the world, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and righteousness and judgment."

Only when we see the "I AM" for who He is do we truly see who we are. Here is where we cease to exalt self and exalt the Self-Existent One.

For Israel this name called into memory the reality of their existence. They existed for one reason: because Yahweh had called them into existence. God had not forgotten the promises He had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The God who existed during their forefathers' days existed in their day. The promises He made in the past were promises for their day. Yahweh was the name that revealed that the self-existent, self-living God is the unchanging God who remains faithful to His word throughout many generations.

Today, Jesus stands with nail-scarred hands outstretched saying, "Because I AM, you can become children of the Most High God." Through Christ you can have assurance that God is there, keeping His promises, never changing even though you have wavered in your promises to Him. In Christ we can run to Yahweh and trust in His name. It cannot change because He cannot change. He is Yahweh, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Assignment:

Read Exodus 1:1-6:10. (Remember as you read, the word "LORD"[every letter capitalized] represents the Hebrew name Yahweh)

Pay particular attention to the context of the story surrounding the giving of God's covenant keeping name, Yahweh (Exodus 3:1-15).

Why was this a critical time for God to reveal His name?

How did Moses respond?

How did Yahweh respond to Moses?

Later on in Exodus, after the escape from Egypt has been accomplished, and immediately after Moses intercedes on behalf of Israel because of the Golden Calf incident Yahweh revealed some of His "Yahweh" qualities to Moses.

Read Exodus 34:5-7.

What are the adjectives that God uses to describe Himself?

Now consider what you have read and learned. How does knowing God as Yahweh affect your life today? Are there any misconceptions or false beliefs that have been exposed? How do you respond to this One who is beyond us in His existence yet intimately involved in our world? How can you exalt Him? Try to write out a prayer of praise and worship to your Yahweh.