



Exodus 3:14

What is Your Name?

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob revealed Himself to Moses in the wilderness at the burning bush.

The LORD God (Yahweh) spoke to Moses and said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, . . . Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt (Exodus 3:7-8, 10).

Moses reaction was, "Lord, I tried once and I failed. Send someone else." Moses was timid, hesitant, fearful, unbelieving, and rebellious and yet God used him.

It was while Moses was putting up his arguments with God for not obeying Him that God revealed who He is in His personal name. God's chosen people were living with Egyptians who were the most polytheistic race of antiquity. We have records containing the names of more than 2200 different Egyptian gods and goddesses whom they worshipped. The people of Israel had become addicted to these gods. The ten plagues would be a contest of the gods of Egypt and the LORD God. Therefore, Moses asked God, "Which God shall I tell them sent me?" What is Your name? (3:13).

I AM WHO I AM

God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM" (v. 14).

This is the most solemn and sublime of all the divine names. Various expressions are used to distinguish Him such as "*the* Name," "the great and terrible Name," "the unutterable Name," "the ineffable Name," "the peculiar name," "the in communicate Name," "the Holy Name," "the separate Name," "the distinguished Name." All of these expressions are attempts to communicate the Tetragrammaton *YHWH* or *JHVH* (*Yahweh* or *Jehovah*). It is a substitute for the ineffable name of God. It was also known as "the name of four letters" because from the Hebrew it is transliterated *JHVH* into English.

The original pronunciation has long been lost because of superstition among the Jewish people. It was an attempt at misguided reverence. *Jehovah* is an artificial English word put together from the four Hebrew consonants *JHVH*

artificial English word put together from the four Hebrew consonants *JHVH* and the vowels of the Hebrew word for God *Aonai*, or Lord. Before the coming of Jesus Christ the Jewish people would pronounce *Adonai* when they read *JHVH*. Later the vowels of *Adonai* were written into the manuscripts. In modern times we have been saying Jehovah or LORD (in small capital letters). The original pronunciation was probably *Yahweh*.

Girdleston in his *Old Testament Synonyms* writes, "It is everywhere a proper name denoting the person of God and Him only . . . The Hebrew may say *the Elohim*, the true God, in opposition to all false gods; but he never says *the Jehovah*, for Jehovah is the name of the true God only. He says again and again, my God or my Elohim, but never my Jehovah, for when he says my God he means Jehovah. He speaks of the God (Elohim) of Israel, but never of the Jehovah of Israel, for there is no other Jehovah. He speaks of the living God, but never of the living Jehovah, for he cannot conceive of Jehovah as other than living."

JHVH is a Hebrew term that is not brought forward into the New Testament because the New Testament was written in Greek. The equivalent term for *JHVH* in Greek is *Kurios*, Lord. It is applied to all three persons of the Trinity. It is justifiable to treat the name *JHVH* of the Hebrew Scriptures as continued in its specific meaning into the New Testament by the name Lord or *Kurios*. It is applicable in this sense to none but deity.

Over the past fifty years, I have pulled together from many highly respected scholars information for the following paragraph. It is a humble attempt to try to understand the Infinite. It is impossible, of course. Only as we look into the face of Jesus do we understand the LORD God.

"I AM THAT I AM" contains each tense of the verb "to be." We can translate it "I was, I am, I shall always continue to be." He is the eternal "I AM." He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He announced that *Elohim* is self-existent, beside whom there is none else. He is without beginning, without ending from everlasting to everlasting He is. *Yahweh* is the Absolute I. Acting with self-dependence, the Absolute God of the fathers; He is the divine Being moving, pervading history, manifesting Himself in the world. He is the self-determining One, Absolute independence, in harmony with Himself, remaining consistent, the absolute I, moving with unlimited freedom. He is the Absolute personality. He is the personal God in His historic manifestation unfolding (revealing) Himself. He is the God of redemption. By this name He is eternal, uncaused, unconditioned, independent and self-sufficient. As the God of grace He becomes whatever is needed to meet the needs of those who are His. He is "the Becoming One." There is the promise of continuing self-manifestation in His name, "I will be that I will be." (I told you it was impossible!)

Jesus is the great I AM

The Pharisees were accusing Jesus of blasphemy because He was forgiving sins. Only God can forgive sins. Their complaint was who are you to do only what God can do? (John chapter eight).

In response to their accusations Jesus said, "Before Abraham was born, I AM" (John 8:58). They knew exactly what He meant. There wasn't any question in their minds because they picked up stone to stone Him to death (v. 59). Jesus Christ names Himself the "I AM." They understood Him to be claiming identity with

the God who spoke to Moses from the burning bush.

In assuming the name "I AM" Jesus was assuming to Himself the attributes and authorities of the LORD God of Israel. Jesus assumed the name of *Yahweh*, or Jehovah. Jesus Christ is *Yahweh* and *Yahweh* is Jesus. Jesus was assuming the holiest word for absolute deity in the Hebrew language. He is a person in the Trinity. On another occasion Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." The response: "The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him" (John 10:30-31).

Jesus used the "I am" formula to communicate the essential attributes of the LORD God. In each saying below Jesus placed the "I am" in the emphatic position. It is God speaking when Jesus says:

- I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst (John 6:35).
- I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life (John 8:12).
- I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture (John 10:9).
- I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11).
- I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this? (John 11:25-26).
- I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me (John 14:6).
- I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser (John 15:1).

The personal God who cuts the covenant in the Old Testament is the same person as Jesus, the Messiah in the New Testament. Our Savior is God's last word to man. When you reject Jesus Christ you reject the only one and true God and Savior.

This is why He can say to the woman caught in adultery and to every other person trapped in sin, "Did no one condemn you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you: go your way; from now on sin no more." He is ready to forgive you and me right now. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). There is no other name to call upon. "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

C. S. Lewis made this observation:

Either Jesus Christ was what He claimed or He was a liar, and we should repudiate Him. Or if He was not what He claimed to be, and not a liar, He was a madman and we should treat Him as such. Or He was what He claimed to be and we should worship Him."

Those were the only options He gave us. The ultimate question is always, "What will you do with Jesus?" The apostle Paul gave the best invitation. He wrote, "if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (Romans 10:9, 10).

What you choose to do with Jesus Christ determines your eternal destiny. He is who He claimed to be. He loved you so much that He chose to come and die in your place to pay your sin debt to the righteousness of God. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall

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God. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

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