

I AM who I AM

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- [0 : 0 0] Names are important. We all like to be known by our name. It makes it personal.!
- Someone said, John. Three heads turned around. So it can be confusing if you have the same name. Chris showed us last week that names mean and stand for something.
- John means God is gracious. Kate means pure. Apparently Sherwin means eminent in friendship. I suspect that doesn't apply to those who don't support Liverpool.
- In the Bible, names also had meaning. The first name in the Bible, Adam, derives from the Hebrew for ground, from which Adam was created.
- Adam named Eve, Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. Abraham means father of many. Israel means he struggles with God.
- [1 : 2 8] Peter means rock. But names in the Bible did not always stand for something good. As a lived-out prophecy, Hosea married an adulterous woman.
- This was a symbol of Israel who was turning from God, who had been adulterous to God. And they had three children. And each were named as part of Hosea's prophecy against Israel.
- The first was named Jezreel because God would punish Jehu's house, who was the king at that time, for the massacre at Jezreel. The third was named Jezreel.
- The third was named Jezreel. The third was named Jezreel, which means not loved. And the third was named Jezreel, which means not my people. Not names you would want to be known by.
- Names that were not names given because they were loved. Names that were given because God had through Hosea a message to give to the people of Israel. Now, the Bible is all about the story of God and his relationship with his people.
- [2 : 3 9] How he called Abraham and renamed him Abraham because he would be the father of many. How God led the Jews from slavery in Egypt to a land flowing with milk and honey.
- About a people who followed and then disobeyed God. A people to whom prophets were sent to warn them of what would happen if they continued in their sin.
- A story about a God who so loved the world he had created and the people living in it. That he sent his son, Jesus Christ, to live, die, and be resurrected to deal with the evil and sin in the world, which we've heard so much about this morning in our prayers.
- And throughout this story, God was known by many names, which described the God he was. They all contain certain aspects of God and teach us something of his character and of his power.
- In the Old Testament, there were two main names with which the writers referred to God. One was Adonai, which means Lord, and can also sometimes refer to humans as Lord.
- [3 : 5 4] The other name was only used of God and was so holy to the Jews that when they wrote it down, they would only write the consonants, not the vowels.
- The consonants are Y-H-W-H, which is where we get the name Yahweh, because most scholars think the vowels are A and E.

We therefore, actually, do not find in the Bible the name Yahweh or the name Jehovah, not in the original language anyway. And in the newer versions of the Bible, when we see the name Yahweh, it is written as Lord in capital letters.

So this was a name that was so holy that they couldn't write it out in full. And last week, we started a short series looking at the names of God, what they meant then and what they mean to us today.

Today, you won't be surprised, perhaps the most well-known event in the Bible, when God makes known his name.

[5 : 06] This is the story of Moses and the burning bush, a story we will all be familiar with if he ever went to Sunday school. So the background to this is that Moses had run away from Egypt because he killed an Egyptian who was beating one of his people.

And because he'd done that, he was afraid that Pharaoh was going to chase him and kill him, so he ran away. He ran away to Midian, where he married Sipporah. And as well, he was tending his father-in-law Jethro's flock that he saw an angel of the Lord in flames, an angel of the Lord in flames of fire in a bush, but the bush didn't burn up.

Moses went to the bush, as I think we all might have done if we saw a bush burning and it wasn't going up in flames. It still looked like a bush. And there were some of these sons there and they weren't being killed.

And the Lord, seeing that Moses had come over, told him to remove his sandals because he was standing on holy ground. And God announced himself saying to Moses, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

And God then explained to Moses that he had seen the people in Egypt. He was going to rescue them and take them to a land flowing with milk and honey. And he was going to use Moses to bring the people out of Egypt.

[6 : 36] Now Moses wasn't very happy about this. He was quite reluctant about doing this because it sounded dangerous and B didn't think he was quite the right person to do it. But God would not take no from Moses for an answer.

So Moses asked, if I'm going to go, if I'm going to see these people, these Israelites, who am I going to say sent me? And God said, tell them, I am who I am.

This is what you are to say to the Israelites. I am sent me to you. God also said to Moses, say to the Israelites, the Lord, and that Lord there is Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has sent me to you.

This is my name forever. The name you shall call me from generation to generation. So God told Moses, tell the people of Israel, I am who I am has sent you.

But what did God mean by saying he was, I am who I am, or I will be who I will be, as it can be translated? I think God was saying two fundamental things about himself.

[7 : 58] The first was that he was self-existent. That means God exists because he exists. He was not created. He does not depend on anything or anyone else for his existence.

He is and always has been and always will be. He was distinguishing himself from the created universe. He wasn't part of the universe. He had created the universe.

And from any other gods who were not true gods. He is the one true and only sovereign God. And he is the source and reason for our existence.

But simply knowing God exists would not have been a great help to the Jews. They already knew he existed. They knew he was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But they needed more than this knowledge if they were to escape from Egypt.

Which brings me to my second point about God. He was with his people. I am who I am means that God is with his people no matter when and no matter where and no matter what was happening.

- [9 : 07] God not only existed, not only was he there, but he was actively there. He was with his people as he'd always been with his people and as he always will be with his people.
- He was with Adam and Eve even when they disobeyed. He was with Noah and enabled him and his family to escape the flood. Excuse me.
- And he was with Noah when he made that covenant that he, God, would never again make a flood to destroy the earth. He was with Abraham when he called him out of his new country, of his own country to a new land and gave him the promise that he would make him a great nation.
- He was with them when he promised that Sarah would have a son. He was with Isaac and Jacob. He was with Jacob when he wrestled with him and declared his name would now be Israel. He was with Joseph and enabled his people to be fed.
- But now it would appear that their God had left them and they were slaves in Egypt. But the name Moses was given as the name of God would assure the Israelites that their God had not deserted them, that he continued to be with them and that he would rescue them.
- [10 : 20] In Isaiah, the prophet relates what God said to Cyrus, the king he was going to use to end Israel's captivity in Babylon.
- God tells Cyrus, I am the Lord, Yahweh, the God of Israel. Even in their captivity, even when they've been taken to Babylon, even when they thought things were helpless, in the worst period of their existence, the people of God were being told that God was still their God.
- God is a faithful God and would remain and always remain faithful to his people. What does this name declared to Moses over 3,000 years ago mean for us today?
- God speaking then as a God of his people, Israel. Today, we are God's people. But you, you, are a chosen people, a royal priesthood.
- A holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are a people of God.
- [11 : 31] Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. That was Peter talking to the people he was writing to. So, today, now, we are the chosen people of God.
- And as with Israel, we are not chosen of anything we may have done or what we may be, or what we may be, but chosen Jesus Christ because God so loved the world.
- And we are the people of God because of what Jesus has done. That does not mean that God has forsaken the Jews by no means. We only have to read Romans to see that he hadn't forsaken them.
- but Jesus came to fulfill the promise of God that there would be a Messiah who would bring in the kingdom of God. Those who follow Jesus belong to that kingdom.
- We, if we follow Jesus, if we know Jesus as our saviour, are part of that kingdom. The declaration of God that he was I am who I am is a declaration to us, the people of God today.
- [12 : 36] God was with his people in those times in the Old Testament and because he does not change, he's with us today. We can rely on him to be faithful, to be faithful to us, to be beside us in the good and difficult times.
- Now, Spurgeon, whenever he preached, said he would always end up by referring and speaking and pointing to Jesus.
- So, anything Spurgeon can do, I can do better. So, that was true of God that he would be with his people in the Old Testament but it is also true of Jesus in the New Testament.

We know that the name Jesus actually means Lord, save. So, from the very start when he was named it was clear that this person was going to be special. But, in the same way that God in the Old Testament was there before anything else.

So, Jesus was there before anything else. Jesus said, I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. And John's Gospel tells us that in the beginning was the Word and the Word was Jesus.

[13 : 58] so, in the beginning before anything else, Jesus was there with his Father and the Holy Spirit. And it was in Jesus that all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through him and for him.

He is before all things and in him all things hold together. Jesus was there at the beginning and before the beginning. And Jesus is with us.

The last words of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said to his disciples, and surely I am with you always at the very end of the age. But in one major way, Jesus associates himself with the God of the Old Testament by taking the name I am, which God told Moses is his name.

Now, Jesus had a few discussions, shall we say, with the Pharisees. And once they asked him, who do you think you are? Jesus replied by saying that God their father glorified Jesus and Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing the day of Jesus.

But the Pharisees could see that Jesus was not yet 50, in fact, he wasn't 30. And wondered how he could have seen Abraham, how could this person hear, saying, Abraham rejoiced at my coming.

[15 : 30] So, Jesus answered, before Abraham was born, I am. And when they heard this, the Pharisees picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus slipped away and escaped.

But why did the Pharisees want to stone Jesus for saying this? Because in saying, I am, Jesus was equating himself with the God who spoke to Moses and told Moses, I am who I am.

Jesus was saying he was God in human form. For the Pharisees, this was blasphemy. Jesus expanded, this was blasphemy, that's why I wanted to stone him.

But Jesus expanded on this I am, this name I am, in seven ways in John's Gospel. It's your turn. Tell me what the I am's are in John's Gospel.

Bread of life. Don't talk at once. What was that? Resurrection of life. No, that wasn't in John's Gospel.

[16 : 42] That was in Revelation. Light of the world. Good shepherd. shepherd. And what equates with a good shepherd? The gate.

The door of the sheep, yeah. And one more. Vine, yes. Who said that? Well done. That man. Yes. All those, all ways that Jesus was equating himself with God.

I am. I'm the person with you, but I'm the person with you who is the bread of life. The one that you can have life. We had communion today and that symbolizes the life that Jesus gives to us.

He says, I am the light of the world. We're trying to get a bit more light here, but with Jesus, he is the light of the world. If we want to enter into the kingdom of God, he is the gateway or door in which we enter.

He is the good shepherd. He's the one who leads us. If we want to follow in his way in the kingdom, we follow Jesus. Jesus. He is the resurrection and life. He is the reason we're here, because he rose again from the dead.

[17 : 49] Because he lives, we also live. He is the way. Anne was talking about the way. He is the way. The way she was talking was on was a pilgrimage way, but the way, the truth, and the life is only in Jesus.

He says, I am the true vine. We can only bear fruit for Jesus if we live and abide in him. So, the I am of the Old Testament turns into the I am of the New Testament.

And this shows us that God has given us Jesus as his son. And as Peter said at the end, of his sermon in Acts, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And having said that, they were hauled up before the Sanhedrin and asked to explain themselves. And Peter again said, it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead that this man stands before you healed.

They've been brought before the Sanhedrin because they healed someone. Can't do that. He is, this is Jesus, the stone the builder rejected which has become the capstone. Salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to by men by which we must be saved.

[19 : 34] The name of Jesus as the name of God is a powerful name and it's the only name we have by which we can be saved. My prayer for each of you today is that you know the name of Jesus as your Lord and as your saviour and that you'll continue in his way in the way of the kingdom of God.

Amen. Amen.