

## I AM with you

Exodus 3:1-15; Psalm 23; Matthew 14: 22-27; John 8:48-59; Philippians 2:1-11.

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Today I want to speak with you about God's chosen name: Yahweh. This is the name whereby God revealed himself to Moses at Exodus 3:1-15; 6:3. God gave Moses his name to set him apart from all other gods, particularly those in Egypt, and also communicate a personal relationship to his people. Not just a "god," but the only God — Yahweh — the Almighty who is "I AM" the only true God, *and* the God who is with His people. While God has many titles in the Old Testament, Yahweh is the personal name for God and is used some 6,800 times! The Name, or what came to be known as the *tetragrammaton*, is the Hebrew name of God transliterated in four letters as YHWH, and articulated, Yahweh.

Sadly, the Jews followed what became a Pharisaic tradition of forbidding the use of the tetragrammaton as an added measure to ensure not breaking the third commandment of taking God's name in vain. This Pharisaic superstition remains with us to this day, some two thousand years later. For instance, most of our English translations render the tetragrammaton, as "LORD." But LORD is a title, and not the personal name whereby God chose to reveal himself to Moses at the burning bush, and thus to Israel. In the medieval era, some scholars began to add vowels to YHWH to create the Latinized version, Jehovah. But these vowels do not belong in the Hebrew and so should not be added in translation.

Recently, the Lockman Foundation released the Legacy Standard Bible which returns to the use of Yahweh in place of LORD in the Old Testament, and carries forward this name into references to Jesus in the New Testament at Philippians 2:11. Jesus also revealed himself in John 8:58 as "I AM," to which, the Jews picked up stones to kill him. They understood what he was saying and it was outrageous to them, but to those in Christ, a wonderful affirmation of Christ's deity.

Now, Let touch on why this important to you. First, Yahweh represents God's chosen, personal name. It is the name by which he has asked to be called. This reveals the personal and relational nature of God, while also conveying his essence as the One who exists in himself, the

great I AM what I AM. Second, in revealing himself to Moses as Yahweh, God also conveys that he is with his people, as their protector and provider. Unlike the distant and indifferent pagan gods, Yahweh stands apart as the one true, almighty God, but a God who is near to his people, protecting and providing for them as a Shepherd does his flock.

Finally, in a pluralistic society, the very word “God” may carry many meanings for many people, but the personal name, Yahweh, sets the only true God apart as personal and near. He is not merely a force, or merely one deity among others; rather, he is the only true and living God, and exists with a true, personal name whereby he has made himself known. And, once we better understand the unique, personal nature of God, as well as his omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient character, we better appreciate what it is to confess, Jesus is Lord — Yahweh in the flesh. AMEN.

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