

## The God Who Is Exodus 3:1-15, Revelation 1:8

### **Slide 1**

A young seminary student once asked the renowned theologian, Karl Barth, what the most profound thing he had learned after decades of studying God. Barth smiled and replied, *"Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."*

Sometimes the most profound truths are the simplest ones, yet they contain depths we spend a lifetime exploring.

Today, we're going to explore the God who revealed Himself to Moses as "I AM" and Who continues to reveal Himself through Jesus Christ.

It all began with a few simple yet infinitely profound words: *"I AM WHO I AM."*

Have you ever introduced yourself to someone and struggled to explain who you really are? We define ourselves by our relationships, our occupations or our achievements.

But when God presents Himself to humanity, in the most definitive way, He doesn't define Himself by anything outside Himself. He simply said, "I AM."

This morning, we stand on holy ground as we encounter the God who needs no introduction yet chooses to reveal Himself to us simply as "I AM."

### **Slide 2**

Think about Moses. Forty years earlier he was a prince of Egypt with dreams of delivering his people. Here in Exodus 3, at eighty years old, he's a shepherd in the wilderness of Midian, tending his father-in-law's sheep.

The palace has been exchanged for pastures. The royal scepter for a shepherd's staff.

It seems like the final chapter of a life that didn't quite work out as planned. But God specializes in meeting us in our wilderness moments.

*Isaiah 55:8-9, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

As Moses led the flock to the far side of the desert, he comes to Mount Horeb, the mountain of God.

There, in the ordinariness of another workday, Moses encountered something extraordinary. A bush that is burning but isn't consumed.

Now, the bush itself wasn't special. It was probably just an ordinary desert shrub; the kind Moses had passed by thousands of times. What made it extraordinary was the presence of God within it.

This teaches us something profound: God transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary by His presence. Your workplace, your home, your daily commute becomes holy ground when God shows up.

### **Slide 3**

Now, it had been around four hundred years since God had spoken directly to His people. Four centuries of silence.

Generations had come and gone. The only thing the people knew about God came from hearing the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Stories that must have seemed like distant myths to slaves born in Egyptian bondage.

But here, as Moses approaches the burning bush, God breaks the silence, and when He does, notice how He first identifies Himself.

Exodus 3:6a, *"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."*

Do you understand what God's saying? Before revealing His eternal name, God connects Himself to human history.

He's not a distant, philosophical concept. He's the God Who's been actively involved in the story of His people, even when they couldn't see or hear Him. This principle appears throughout Scripture.

Sometimes God's apparent silence is His invitation for us to be still and recognize His presence.

Psalms 46:10 tells us to, *"Be still, and know that I am God"* and Habakkuk 2:20 repeats this instruction, *"The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him."*

This is why, when God seems silent in our lives, it doesn't mean He's absent.

He's still the God of our story, working in ways we may not perceive until we look back and see the burning bushes we almost walked past.

Then, as Moses starts to come closer, God warns him in Exodus 3:5, *"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."*

In the ancient Near East, removing one's sandals was a sign of respect and humility.

To remove your sandals was to acknowledge you were on someone else's property, in the presence of someone greater. Even slaves went barefoot.

This admonishment to Moses echoes Joshua's experience when he encountered the commander of the Lord's army near Jericho. The divine messenger gave Joshua the same command.

Joshua 5:15, *"The commander of the Lord's army replied, 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so."*

Both encounters required the same response: reverent submission before God's holy presence, but there's something deeper here.

Shoes are what protect us from the earth. Shoes separate us from the ground. God's inviting Moses to remove what separates him from truly experiencing His presence.

God is inviting Moses to be vulnerable. God is inviting Moses to feel the holy ground beneath his feet.

Which begs the question, what shoes do we need to remove today? What barriers have we erected between ourselves and God's presence?

Perhaps it's our self-sufficiency, our cynicism after years of disappointment, or our carefully constructed image.

God constantly invites us to remove whatever separates us from experiencing the holy ground of His presence.

#### Slide 4

So, after God explains to Moses what He want him to do, Moses asks for God's name. Moses isn't making polite conversation here. In the ancient world, names carried power and meaning.

To know someone's name was to have a relationship with them, even an authority in invoking that name. The Egyptians had many gods, each with names that described their function or domain.

But when Moses asks, *"What is Your name?,"* God responds with something unprecedented in human history: *"I AM WHO I AM."*

Exodus 3:14, *"God said to Moses, 'I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'"*

Now, this isn't really a name in the conventional sense; it's a declaration of being itself.

God's saying, *"I don't derive My existence from anything else. I simply AM. I am the ground of all being, the source of all existence. Before anything was, I AM."*

This aligns with what Jesus declares in John 8:58b, *"Before Abraham was born, I Am."* Notice Jesus doesn't say "I was" but "I Am," claiming the same eternal present tense that God revealed to Moses.

The name God gives becomes the basis for the sacred name YHWH (Yahweh), sometimes rendered as Jehovah. It's built on the Hebrew verb "to be."

But it's more than existence. It carries the sense of active presence, of becoming, of causing to be.

When God says "I AM," He's declaring:

- I am actively present
- I am unchanging yet dynamic
- I am the source of all that is
- I am sufficient for all your needs
- I am who I prove myself to be

Psalm 135:13 confirms this: *"Your name, O Lord, endures forever, your renown, O Lord, throughout all generations."* The name YHWH carries God's eternal character and His covenant faithfulness across all time.

The Jewish people held this name in such reverence that they wouldn't even pronounce it, substituting "Adonai" (Lord) instead.

They understood something we often miss in our casual age: the weight of glory in God's self-revelation.

Theologians call this concept "aseity" (a-see-i-ty). God's self-existence, everything else in the universe is contingent.

We exist because our parents existed. The earth exists because of cosmic forces set in motion. Even the universe itself had a beginning.

But God simply IS. He has no beginning, no cause, no dependency. As Revelation 1:8 declares, *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."*

Psalm 90:2 expresses this truth poetically, *"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."*

God exists outside of time, the eternal foundation upon which all reality rests.

Think about the security this offers us. Every other foundation in life shifts:

- Economies collapse, but God IS
- Relationships fail, but God IS
- Health deteriorates, but God IS
- Circumstances change, but God IS

When everything else in life is in flux, we anchor our souls to the One who simply IS. As Isaiah 26:4 declares, *"Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord himself, is the Rock eternal."*

### **Slide 5**

Then, after revealing His eternal name, God does something beautiful. He immediately connects His eternal nature to human history.

Exodus 3:15b, *"This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation."*

God isn't content to be known merely as the philosophical absolute. He insists on being known as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The God who enters into covenant relationship with broken, imperfect people.

Abraham lied about his wife and laughed at God's promises. Isaac showed favoritism among his children.

Jacob's name literally means "deceiver." This is the God who doesn't wait for us to get our acts together before He engages with our stories.

The God who revealed Himself as I AM to Moses is the same God who reveals Himself to us through Jesus Christ. The same God who spoke from the burning bush speaks to us today through His Word and Spirit.

This consistency of character appears throughout Scripture. Malachi 3:6a states, *"I the Lord do not change."*

The stories of Scripture aren't ancient history. They're family history. The God of Abraham is your God.

The God who delivered Israel from Egypt wants to deliver you from whatever bondage holds you. The God who provided manna in the wilderness wants to be your daily bread.

Consider how this truth transforms your perspective. When you face impossible odds, remember: the I AM who parted the Red Sea is your God.

When you need provision, remember: the I AM who fed millions in the desert is your God. When you feel alone, remember: the I AM who walked with Israel through the wilderness is your God.

## **Slide 6**

Think about it. Moses wasn't looking for God that day. He was just doing his job, following the familiar path, when suddenly the ordinary became extraordinary.

The question isn't whether God is still speaking. It's whether we're still listening. Our burning bush might not be a miraculous sight. It might only be:

- A Scripture that suddenly comes alive with meaning
- A conversation that touches something deep within us
- A moment of unexpected peace in the midst of chaos
- A provision that arrives just when we need it most
- A conviction that won't let us go



The God who IS constantly reveals Himself to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. He's not confined to church buildings or religious moments.

He meets us in our wilderness, in our ordinary Tuesday afternoons, in our places of failure and frustration, but Moses' experience teaches us that we have to turn aside to see.

Exodus 3:3, *"So Moses thought, 'I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.'"*

Moses could've rationalized it away. He could've kept walking. He could've been too busy with the sheep to investigate, but he turned aside.

He paid attention. He removed his sandals and encountered the living God.

Jeremiah 29:13 promises, *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."* God reveals Himself to those who actively look for Him.

## **Slide 7**

### Conclusion

We start this short series here at the burning bush because this is where God definitively answers the most fundamental question of human existence: Is anyone there?

Is there meaning beyond what we see? Is there hope beyond our circumstances?

God's answer echoes across the centuries: I AM. Not "I was" as if He's a relic of the past. Not "I will be" as if He's only a future hope. But I AM. Present tense, active, engaged, here, now, with us.

As you study the Bible, you'll discover how Jesus takes this divine name and applies it to Himself in several magnificent declarations found in John's Gospel:

- I am the bread of life (John 6:35).
- I am the light of the world (John 8:12)
- I am the good shepherd (John 10:11).

Each declaration shows us that the God Who revealed Himself to Moses continues to reveal Himself to us, ultimately becoming flesh and dwelling among us.

But it all starts here, with this foundational truth: God IS. He doesn't need us to validate His existence. He doesn't require our belief to be real. He simply IS.

Yet here's the wonder of grace: this self-sufficient, eternal, all-powerful God chooses to reveal Himself to us. He wants to be known by us. He desires to be the God of our story.

Moses left that burning bush encounter transformed. He went from a man running from his past to a deliverer of nations.

He went from a stuttering shepherd to a spokesman for God. He went from isolation in the wilderness to intimacy with the Almighty.

The same God who transformed Moses wants to transform you. The same I AM who commissioned Moses wants to commission you.

The same presence that made common ground holy wants to make your common life sacred.

The ancient name revealed to Moses is as fresh and powerful today as it was beside that burning bush. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is alive. The I AM still speaks. The holy ground awaits.

Will you turn aside to see? Will you remove your shoes? Will you encounter the God who IS?