



God is the Great “I AM”

Exodus 3:1-15

By Daniel J. Denk

This Bible study takes a closer look at a characteristic of God that is important for us to acknowledge and understand today.

Primary Questions: These are the core questions we will ask in this study of [Exodus 3:1-15](#):

- Who is God?
- What is God like?
- How do we apply these truths to influence the way we think about God and understand our world?
- How will we respond in appropriate worship?

Background Note: The tribe of Israel had settled in Egypt for several generations (430 years). They grew to a great number—so great that the new Pharaoh, who did not know of Joseph, made the Hebrew people into a slave nation. They were given the hardest and dirtiest work, making bricks for Pharaoh’s many building enterprises and working the fields. But God heard their cries and saw their suffering, and he determined to deliver them out of Egypt and bring them to the Promised Land. In his providence, The Lord prepared Moses to be the instrument of his deliverance.

1. Read [Exodus 3:1-15](#). What images in this encounter emphasize the holiness, or “otherness” of God (vv. 1-6)? Do you think that people today have an adequate sense of the holiness of God? (See also [Exodus 19:10-13](#)).
2. Notice the verbs in 3:7-10. What do they reveal about the Lord’s response to the suffering of his people?
 - How does he identify with them?
 - What does this tell us about God’s involvement in our lives and his compassion for our suffering?
3. These two aspects of God are sometimes referred to as his *Transcendence* (he stands above the earth, as in [Isaiah 40](#)) and his *Immanence* (his presence and involvement with his people). Discuss how these truths counteract the belief of *Deism* on the one hand (God created the world but does not intervene in the world in any way) and *Pantheism* on the other (God is equal to the creation).
4. Rather than focus on Moses’ feelings of inadequacy, let’s look at how God reveals himself. List all the things that God says about himself.

5. In vv. 6 and 15, God identifies himself as “the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” What importance does this have for Moses? For the Israelites?

Note: Remember, it has been more than 400 years since the time of these patriarchs. Also notice that he does not say, “I was the God of Abraham,” but “I am the God of Abraham.” Jesus interprets this as a statement of the resurrection, believing that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are still among the living ([Matthew 22:32](#)).

6. In verse 13, Moses essentially asks, “But what is your name?” How does God respond? What can you learn from this description? The phrase “I am who I am” is in the future tense and can also be rendered “I will be what I will be.” It is the Hebrew verb for *being* or *existing*. It is also related to the word *to breathe*, *to live*. This name describes God’s essence; he is self-existent, unchangeable, eternal and the source and goal of all things. The name “I AM” comes from the four Hebrew letters, *YHWH* (Yahweh), usually translated LORD (all caps) in our English Bibles. Note that God had already revealed himself by this name beginning in [Genesis 2:4](#). However, it may have been lost during the long exile in Egypt. Discuss how this revelation of the “I AM” adds to our understanding of who God is.
7. What are some of the far-reaching implications of God’s promise to Moses that “I will be with you?” (See also [Exodus 4:12](#)). Consider also the Christmas promise of *Emmanuel*, “God with us.” What are the implications of this promise for us today?

Praise God for his wonderful revelation of himself and his character through this encounter with Moses. Praise him for his great compassion and his intervention in the lives of his people. Praise him that he is Immanuel and he promises to be “with us” in all of the challenges of life.