

Exodus 3:1-15: God's Holy Name

No matter how bleak our present circumstances, God's holy name is the guarantee of all God's promises. When all is said and done, God's holy name will be our eternal reason for praise.

I. Introduction

A. No matter how large the amount promised in the check, a *check is only as good as the signature on the check.*

B. YHWH is the name on all God's promissory notes.

1. We may have no doubt that God has promised us good things.
2. But from time to time—especially when we are in the desert of despair, when there seems to be a mismatch between God's promises and present circumstances, we may wonder whether God can deliver on what he has promised.
3. At those times, we need to examine the signature.

C. That's what we're going to do this morning: examine God's signature.

1. At the beginning of Exodus 3, we find Moses *in the desert of despair*, tending his father-in-law's flock.

a. 400 years of *unfulfilled promises* to Israel

b. Moses' *unfulfilled ministry* ... in a desert of despair where hope goes to die.

2. Moses meets a *holy wonder*

3. A series of objections and assurances between Moses and the Lord ensues, leading to the question/objection: "What is his name?" (Exod 3:13)

4. God answers/assures Moses by revealing his holy name: "I am who I am" (Exod 3:14)

5. God's holy name *authorizes* Moses' prophetic ministry and *guarantees* Israel's promised deliverance

D. Thesis: *Exodus 3 reveals an extraordinary God who stands behind the Bible's extraordinary promises. God's holy name stands behind all God's promises,*

guarantees their fulfillment, guarantees that, when all is said and done, we will only ever have reason to praise his holy name.

E. Is this check good? Can God's signature be trusted? Let's examine the signature in Exodus 3.

What does God's holy name reveal?

II. That God is independent, infinite, eternal, and unchanging.

A. God's holy name reveals that God is independent.

1. In describing God's high and holy being, it's easier to say what God is not than to say what God is. We are dependent beings. God is not dependent.

2. Genesis 1: Unlike other ANE creation accounts, God has no origin story.

3. Exodus 3's burning bush: As the fire burns by its own burning, so God exists by his own existing.

4. Acts 17:25; Romans 11:34-35

B. God's holy name reveals that God is infinite.

1. In describing God's high and holy being, it's easier to say what God is not than to say what God is. We are finite, limited beings. God is not finite, not limited.

2. In Exodus 3:14, God reveals his name by an unusual Hebrew grammatical construction: *idem per idem*

a. An *idem per idem* construction where the subordinate clause precedes the main clause yields a **definite sense**: "What you need to bake, bake, what you need to boil, boil" (Exod 16:23)

* Draws a circle around

b. An *idem per idem* construction where the subordinate clause follows main clause yields an **indefinite sense**: "I am going where I am going" (2 Sam 15:20)¹

* Erases the circle

c. **God's existence is unbounded.**

3. "O the depth of the riches..." (Rom 11:33). God's is "an infinite ocean of being" (John of Damascus). "His greatness is unsearchable" (Ps 145:3).

C. God's holy name reveals that God is **eternal and unchanging.**

1. **In describing God's high and holy being, it is easier to say what God is not than to say what God is. We are temporal, changeable beings. We have beginnings and ends. We come and we go. We grow and we fade. God is not temporal, not changeable.**

2. **Exodus:** The God who made promises to the fathers **in the past: I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** (Exod 3:6), who promises to deliver Israel through Moses **in the present: I will be with you** (Exod 3:12), who promises to memorialize his name for all generations **in the future: This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations** (Exod 3:15) is **eternal and unchanging: he is who he is.**

3. God has no beginning or end. He cannot get better; he cannot grow worse. He is the one "who was and who is and who is to come" (Rev 1:8; 4:8). He is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8).

D. **That's the signature on the check.**

What does God's holy name reveal?

III. That, because this God is our God, the fulfillment of God's promises does not depend upon our limitations, our changing circumstances, but on God's independent, infinite, eternal, and unchanging greatness.

A. As Augustine rightly observes, **Exodus 3 reveals two names** for God: **God's name of mystery:** "I am who I am"; **God's name of mercy:** the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

1. By the first name, **God reveals the mystery of his high and holy being.**

¹ Cornelis den Hertog, "The Prophetic Dimension of the Divine Name: On Exodus 3:14a and Its Context," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 224.

2. By the second name, **God binds himself to us**.

B. When I give you a command, I obligate you to fulfill that command. Your fulfillment rests on your ability. **When I make a promise**, I obligate myself to fulfill that promise. My fulfillment rests on my ability. So it is with the promises of God. His holy name is his holy signature, his holy guarantee.

C. God has bound his holy name to you and to all that he has promised to you.

D. Don't look at your poverty; **examine his signature**.

What does God's holy name reveal?

IV. That, when all our trials are over, when all is said and done, we will only ever have reason to praise God's holy name.

A. "You will serve me on this mountain" (3:12)

B. "This is my name/memorial forever" (3:15)

C. God has bound his holy name to you and to all that he has promised to you in such a way that, when all is said and done, you will be bound to praise his holy name forever and ever.

V. Today is Palm Sunday.

A. We remember **who came**: "Blessed is he who comes **in the name of the Lord**" (Ps 118:26).

B. We remember **what happened** when he came: "The stone that the builders **rejected** has become the cornerstone" (Ps 118:22).

C. We remember **why** he came, **why** he was rejected: Mark 10:45

1. Why he came: that the Lord, who is **independent**: "who came not to be served but to serve"

2. Why he was rejected: might give himself as a **ransom** for many: "to give his life as a **ransom** for many"

a. Freedom

b. Service

c. Praise

D. In him, **all God's promises are *signed, sealed, and delivered***—in blood! For all eternity, we will only ever have reason to ***praise*** his holy name: **“Worthy...”** (Rev 5).