

:: summary

in today's culture naming can seem somewhat arbitrary, as given names increasingly reflect trends created by celebrity baby names like Apple, Blue Ivy and Pilot Inspektor. For ancient Israel and the Near East, however, naming was far from arbitrary. A name expressed something about the character and essence of the person, place or thing bearing the name, which is why the names by which God reveals himself to us are so significant. God is doing more than letting us know what to call him – He is describing for us what He is like, and no name is more essential to who God is than the personal name He reveals to us, which is I AM WHO I AM.

:: discussion

We all know change can be good or bad. Change can be something we pursue, but in many ways, change happens to us, often without warning. This is why so much of our lives are spent trying to “establish ourselves” and protect ourselves from change as we ask the timeless question, “Where do we find an ultimate sense of security? The answer is wrapped up in the name and character of God, who calls Himself I AM WHO I AM.

When you hear the word “change,” how does it make you feel?

Read Exodus 3:1-17

In this famous introduction, where God appears to Moses in the form of a burning bush, God reveals Himself to Moses and to us by a name that describes what He is like. In verse 13, when Moses asks God his name, he is really asking “Who are you?” to which God answers, “I AM WHO I AM” or “I AM” in the shorter form. In doing so, God reveals to Moses and to us the meaning of His personal name, which is Yahweh (yah-weh) in Hebrew.

What does it mean when we ask God who He is and He answers, “I AM”? What are the implications of this name and the way God reveals it to Moses?

Read Malachi 3:6-7; James 1:17

When God is referred to as “LORD” in all capital letters, it is a translation of the Hebrew name Yahweh, which means “He is” or “He will be,” the third person form of God's name I AM. Notice there is no fluidity to God's name and character – His name is not “Maybe” or “We'll See.” God's name is I AM. God addresses one of the implications of His name in the book of Malachi, when the LORD affirmed directly that He does not change.

What does this aspect of God's name imply for how we experience the changes of life?

Read John 8:48-58

In response to the religious leaders, Jesus made his most bold and shocking declaration, echoing God's affirmation to Moses from the burning bush when Jesus said, “I am!” In this powerful statement Jesus expressed his oneness with God, revealing the wonderful truth that Jesus is God with us. In Christ, God had come to live among us and would later die to atone for our rebellious behavior against him and rise from the dead to act as a mediator seated on God's throne who has made it possible for us to know God as Father.

How does this understanding of God's name and the reality of His presence with you in Jesus impact your perception of God?

God reveals himself to us in His name - the LORD, Yahweh, He is. He exists eternally as God the Father, Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit, and there is nothing before Him or outside of Him. He has no influences, and therefore He never changes. He is God with us and is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

