

God has a Name – YAHWEH

6/2/24

Exodus 3:1-15

Sunday AM

My proper name is **Joseph Italo Rodgers**. I was named after my German grandmother and Italian grandfather. When I was a boy, I didn't appreciate my name b/c some people gave me a hard time about my middle name. Not only was it often mispronounced – "I-talo" or "It-alo", I also had friends who'd poked fun calling me "eat-a-lot" or "its-a-load." Of course, now that I'm older, and b/c of my grandparent's incredible investment in my life – I'm proud to bear their names.

As I thought about my proper name, I was reminded of God's proper name – the name He gave Himself...

I am the LORD (Yahweh), that is my name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images.
Isaiah 42:8

The name **YHWH** (Jehovah) is the most often used name for God in the O.T. occurring some 6,828x. In your Bible, it is distinguished by the word **LORD** (in caps). It means "*to be*" as in "to live". It implies that God in His essence is life and that all life is found in Him alone. *He is the self-existent One* who is personal and engaged – who's always been and will always be.

Originally, this name was written w/ 4 consonants only (no vowels) yod-hey-vav-hey – and the transliteration of this word is – Jehovah.

The Jews considered this name so holy that they refused to pronounce it for fear they'd profane God's holiness. Whenever they came upon it in their reading, they wouldn't speak it aloud as a sign of respect – and the only time YHWH was pronounced aloud was once a year on the Day of Atonement. When scribes would copy the Scriptures, they'd stop and take a bath before writing the name, pick up a new pen to write this one name, and then destroy the pen afterward.

Talk about a far cry from how God's name is respected today. If anything, we're way too casual w/ His name. Instead of hesitating to pronounce it, we use it flippantly. It's part of our slang. Many people use it to curse w/ no concern for the 3rd commandment that warns us to never misuse the name of the YHWH. That is, we're never to treat his name as *empty* or *w/out value* but only w/ *respect* and *reverence*.

The most important text in the Bible for understanding the meaning of the name YHWH is **Exodus 3:1-15**. In this text, God introduces Himself to Moses by speaking to him thru a burning bush that wasn't being consumed. In the process, He commands Moses to go back to Egypt to bring his people Israel out of captivity. Of course, Moses wasn't too thrilled w/ God's request, so he asked God just what he was supposed to say to the people – and God told him exactly what he was to say. He said, "Tell them the God of you fathers has sent me to you – and His name is **I AM WHO I AM** – that is, His name is YHWH!

Now go, for I am sending you to Pharaoh. You must lead my people Israel out of Egypt." But Moses objected, "Who am I to appear before Pharaoh? Who am I to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt?" God said, "I will be w/ you. And this is your sign that I am the one who has sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God at this very mountain." Again, Moses objected, "If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' they will ask, 'What is his name?' Then what should I tell them?" God said, "I AM WHO I AM. Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you." God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: YHWH, the God of your ancestors – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – has sent me to you. This is my eternal name, my name to remember for all generations. Exodus 3:1-15

Notice that God gives (3) answers to Mo's question.

vs 14 – God says, *I AM WHO I AM.*

vs 14 – God says, *I AM has sent me to you.*

vs 15 – God says, *Yahweh has sent me to you*

Well... This AM, I want us to consider the implication that God is YHWH – and what this means to us.

I YHWH means God **IS**

That is – God **EXISTS!** Or as Francis Schaffer wrote – *God is there!* God says to Moses – tell them I AM! While this might seem obvious, it's not as obvious as you might think as too many people today say w/ their lips God exists, but w/ their lives they tell a completely different story. I call this **religious atheism** – I believe in God but live as if he doesn't exist!

Analogy – suppose the president of the U.S. invited you to the White House for dinner. As you enter, the president is sitting by the fireplace ready to welcome you, but instead of stopping to say hello, you walk by him w/out a glance/greeting. Then, thru-out the evening, as dinner is served, you neither look at him, speak to him, or thank him for his invitation. Yet every time someone asks if you believe in his existence, you say, "Of course." You even agree that the W.H. was where he lived, yet while there, you pay him no regard or attention. Practically speaking you act as if you don't believe he exists even though you say w/ your lips that you do – but there's no affection in your heart.

SEE – just b/c we say God exists doesn't mean we'll bend our knees/bow our hearts in worship to Him by giving Him our mind's **attention**, heart's **affection**, soul's **ambition**, and life's **actions** fully to Him.

In Romans 1, Paul argued to the contrary saying sinful man will do about anything to ignore that God IS.

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness/unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, b/c what may be known about God is present in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are w/out excuse, b/c, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools exchanging the glory of the incorruptible God for images made like corruptible man – birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Romans 1:18-23

This passage concludes that all of the evidence that God IS – is so exceedingly overwhelming that all of us are w/out excuse. Meaning we can't plausibly say that God IS NOT! The intricacies of creation testify to an intelligent designer, the fact that we can differentiate right from wrong and good from evil – and that we have a conscious all verify that God IS.

II YHWH means God is **BIG**

I read a story this week about a pastor from OK riding in a taxi in NYC who noticed a little statue on the driver's dashboard. Curious, he asked about it. The man, who was from India, shared that the statute was his god – and he began sharing about his Hindu god. After he finished, he said, "Can you tell me about YOUR God." The pastor said, "Well, to begin w/, He won't fit on your dashboard!"

When we say that YHWH is big, we're saying that God is all-powerful and can't be put in a box.

The trouble w/ many people today is that they haven't found a God big enough for their modern needs. So, they either give up on the true God or make one up.

I think this occurs b/c we often have a **misconception** of God. We see Him as a resident policeman out to bust us for our bad behavior. Or we see Him as a grand old man who just winks at our wrongdoing. Or we see Him as our holy vending machine or cosmic bellhop there solely to meet our needs and attend our wishes.

We forget that God is sovereign over all. He doesn't exist for us – we exist for Him. He doesn't work on our timetable, we live to His timetable. Yet, when God doesn't show up in the way we've hoped/expected, and things don't go as we think they should, we project our unbelief/ignorance on Him thinking that He's either impotent/checked out. **We put Him in a box!**

That is – we stuff Him into our pockets imprisoning Him behind bars of unbelief/rebellion – shrinking Him down so much that our ideas about Him aren't close to who He really is or what the Bible says about Him.

I wonder... How big is your God box? What do you believe God can/will do vs what He can't/won't do? **SEE** – *the size of your God box is always proportional to your faith and your obedience to God and His Word.*

Ultimately, following God and putting our trust in Him boils down to whether or not we believe that He is who He says that He is and can do what He says He can do – that He truly has the whole world in His hands.

Yahweh is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He doesn't faint or grow weary.
Isaiah 40:28

If God is the everlasting absolute Reality, then He is the Creator of the ends of the earth/universe. And if He's the Creator of everything, then all energy, motion, combustion, fusion, and fission originate in Him. Somehow all the energy in the universe had to have a beginning, and it started w/ YHWH – the first and absolute embodiment of divine/infinite power.

Truth – if you've stuck God in a box, then it's unlikely that you're ever going to see how awesome He is. Let Him out! After all, if the grave couldn't hold Him, what makes you think your lack of faith can? Let go and let God show you who He is.

III YHWH means God is **UNCHANGING**

This means that God is **immutable** and **absolute** – you never have to worry that He will not be who He is.

I, YHWH, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed. Malachi 3:6

God is **all-sufficient** and **self-sufficient**. He cannot be determined by any forces outside himself, nor is He subject to change like we are. Whereas we might change our minds b/c of unforeseen circumstances or poor decision-making b/c He is omniscient, foreseeing all circumstances and omnipotent, having no weakness – nothing in all creation surprises Him, catches Him off guard, or backs him into a corner.

James says – God is who he is – and *w/ Him there is no variation or shifting shadow* (James 1:17) that is, God doesn't change to change. He will be the same today as He was yesterday and forevermore.

IV YHWH means God is **PRESENT**

W/ Moses – God promised that He'd be present w/ Him going before him and following up after Him to accomplish His calling upon His life.

For God – to be present means that He is faithful. Even when we're faithless – **God will be who He is** – both present and faithful in our lives.

W/in this story, the Jews had been in Egypt so long and had compromised so much that **Egypt was now living in them** – and they were miserable. Yet despite their compromise, they were still His people under His covenant – so, He was w/ them and heard their cry – and God was faithful to His promises and showed up.

NOW – let me show you my favorite part of God being *present* as our I AM. Fast forward from the Exodus to Jesus. One holy night, when few if any were watching – the Great I AM became flesh and made His dwelling among us. Then, when He was around 30, the God/man began His early ministry taking on (12) apprentices that He'd later commission to take the story of His life, death, and resurrection to the world. ***Yet along the way, He had to help them see His true identity as the I AM who came to save them.***

This is the message of the Gospel of John where Jesus revealed Himself as the I AM of the O.T. offering to them (7) I AM statements.

- I am the **Bread of Life**
- I am the **Light of the World**
- I am the **Gate**
- I am the **Good Shepherd**
- I am the **Resurrection and the Life**
- I am the **Way, the Truth, and the Life**
- I am the **Vine**

But the (12) struggled to connect the dots until that fateful evening on the Sea of Galilee when the storms were crashing and Jesus walked on the water.

Recap – After the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus sent the (12) ahead by boat when a storm blew in – and although they were experienced fishermen, they were in trouble. Suddenly, from out of nowhere, Jesus came walking on the water. **DYK** that Mark recorded that Jesus didn't intend to stop but *meant to pass them by*. Instead, when they saw Him, they thought he was a ghost – but instead of walking by, Jesus engaged them telling them – *take courage... it is I.*

What you may not realize is that Jesus was revealing His true identity as the Great I AM to them. Many scholars believe that in Jesus intending to pass by them, He was helping them correlate the story of God passing by Moses to show Moses His glory. But then for Him to speak and say, “It is I” these same scholars attest that what Jesus was saying is – *it is Me the I AM!* And I AM present w/ you in this moment.

DYK what the (12) said in response as Jesus and Peter climbing in the boat... For the 1st time in the Gospels, some 2.5 yrs into Jesus' ministry, they recognized Jesus as God in the flesh – the I AM of the O.T. was present w/ them in that moment. Listen to Matthew

Then those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.” Mt. 14:33

YHWH – the self-existent one who is present w/ us – who came to seek and to save the lost.