

What Names Can We Use For God?

The *International Sunday School Lesson* for Sunday, September 5, 2010
Exodus 3:1-6, 13-15

“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’; and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:14—NASB-U).

“God said to Moses, ‘I Am Who I Am.’ He said further, ‘Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I Am has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14—NRSV).

“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:14—KJV).

In the Book of Genesis, the Holy Spirit inspired various people to appreciate their special relationship with God by giving God names and titles such as, “God Most High,” “Everlasting God,” “God of Israel,” “the Lord will provide.” When God met Moses at the burning bush, and commissioned Moses to go to Egypt and free His people from slavery, Moses asked God for His name. Since the Egyptians worshipped many gods with many names, Moses knew that the Israelites would ask for the name of the God who sent him.

God gave Moses the name YHWH (the Hebrew name without vowels), often translated “Jehovah” and “Yahweh.” Furthermore, God emphasized, “This is my name forever” (Exodus 3:15). In many translations, the name LORD (with all capital letters) indicates that the original name in the Hebrew Scriptures is YHWH. In addition, God emphasized historical continuity, for He is “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

YHWH is sometimes translated, “I Am That I Am,” meaning God is self-existent, and does not depend on anyone or anything to exist. YHWH is sometimes translated, “I Am What I Am.” God is all-powerful and everywhere present, for examples, and His supernatural nature will never change. YHWH is sometimes translated, “I Am Who I Am.” God is always holy, loving, just, and merciful, and God will never change His moral character. YHWH is sometimes translated, “I Will Be Who I Will Be.” Therefore, the Son of God, without changing His divine nature or moral attributes, was born as a human being, Jesus of Nazareth. Fully God and fully man, He demonstrated His divine nature with power and His sinless moral character by all His actions and teachings.— L.G. Parkhurst, Jr. — Copyright 2010 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Questions for Further Thought

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1. Prior to God meeting with Moses through the burning bush, what ways and means do you think God might have used to prepare Moses for many of the tasks before him during the next forty years?

2. Think of some things you have done for God or your church or others in the service of the Lord. In what ways do you think God prepared you in advance to do what you did? How do you prepare yourself now to serve God and others?

3. Moses felt unprepared or unqualified to do what God wanted of him. How do you feel sometimes about the tasks before you? What do you do when you feel unprepared to do something, especially something related to the work of God?

4. Why is it important to understand some of the ways that God works with consistency throughout history in the lives of His people in both the Old and the New Testaments? When you do not understand something in the Bible (perhaps you do not understand God's reason for doing something or asking something of someone), how does your knowledge of God and of His work in the past that you do understand help you maintain your faith in God and God's divine nature and character?

5. What are some reasons people need to study the Bible from cover to cover, and not just one part of the Bible or just their favorite parts? How does Bible study help you face the challenges of your daily life and future concerns? Think of the words in this hymn: “O God out help in ages past, our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home,” and relate them to your life.