

1. God is the Living God who speak through fire
2. God is the Faithful God who speaks to our hearts

What's in a name? For you and I – not much.

- My name means lover of horses and I've never sat on a horse.
- Five baby girls have been baptized into our church family in the past year – all of them with a name that starts with the letter "A." Why? Moms and dads were too lazy to get through the entire book of names? Or perhaps just found one they liked, that had a ring to it, that sounded good.

What's in a name? How about these from history?

- Charles the Simple, son of Louis the Stammerer, got his name because he tried to negotiate with Norsemen who took advantage of his easy going nature and took over his country.
- Or there is Louis the Sluggard. How is that for an inspiring name? He was so self-indulgent that he ruled the Franks for 1 whole year before they ousted him from the throne.
- Another name that oozes "confidence" – Ethiered the Unready. He couldn't expel the Danes from England because he was unprepared.
- Then there is Louis the Fat. He got his name because he was unable to climb up on a horse and lead his soldiers into battle. Inspiring? Confidence?

What's in a name? When it comes to history not much. When it comes to our own names not much.

But when it comes to God's name – everything. You see, his name doesn't just identify him like ours does, but describes him, tells us about his character, tells us who he is and what he means to us today. And his name inspires confidence.

This morning, we focus on the first name of a number of Old Testament names we will look at in a summer series called, "To Know His Name." Today that name is I AM WHO I AM.

Listen to Exodus 3:13-15.

### 1. The Living God who speaks through fire

Do you know Moses? He was the son of a Hebrew slave living in the land of Egypt some 1500 years before Christ. He was the one who was placed in a basket and floated down the Nile River because the Pharaoh of Egypt had issued a decree that all male babies were to be killed. He was worried the Hebrews were becoming too large and too powerful and too threatening to his own nation. It was Pharaoh's own daughter who found baby Moses in a basket and raised him as her own son. You can read the details in chapter 1 of Exodus.

In chapter 2, we're told Moses comes across and Egyptian slave master abusing a Hebrew slave. Moses steps in and ends up killing the Egyptian master. So Moses flees from Egypt, into the wilderness, far away from his home where he ends up a shepherd.

Here's what happens some 40 years later. (Exodus 3:1-12). Moses then offers one more excuse, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'what is his name?' Then what shall I tell them." Moses is not sure he wants to leave his sheep. He isn't sure he wants to go home. He isn't sure he can lead his people out of slavery. He lacks confidence.

Here is God's answer: "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.'" This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I AM has sent me to you." In Hebrew it's just four letters. In fact, some people call it the tetragrammaton, the "four-letter name." But those four letters tell us the name of the God who speaks through fire.

- It's a name that points to a God who is greater than the idols of stone and wood the people of Egypt worshiped.
- It's a name that points to a God who is greater than the sun or the Nile River whom the Egyptians thought was the source of life.

- He is not money or homes with 3 car garages or a quality education or a paycheck in our hand – the kinds of THINGS we look to for confidence but will only let us down.
- He is not some mystical force or some magical fire...

He is the LIVING God who speaks through fire. The One who is, who was and always will be. He thinks. He decides. He acts. I AM WHO I AM.

And he does so independently for his name declares absolute independence. “I AM. I exist on my own. I am the source of all that is and ever will be.” He’s not bound by laws. Gravity doesn’t hold him in place. Time doesn’t limit the things he can do or the places he can be.

All that is in this four letter name: I AM WHO I AM.

Think of the message intended for Moses, who doesn’t want to go where he is called, who doesn’t think he can do what he is asked to do, who has no confidence...

- Moses is right to wonder how? He has no experience, no insight, no special power – but the great I AM will be with him.
- On his own Moses can’t lead a nation of a million people, or convince a stubborn Pharaoh to let God’s people go. But the I AM, will be with him.
- Moses wouldn’t be trapped by the Red Sea with no where to go, who on his own could never turn the Nile River to blood, or stand against all who oppose him, but I AM, the God of absolute independence, the Living God who speaks through fire would.

And that confidence and hope Moses found in this name is yours too. I AM – who goes with you. Who gives you new confidence to face each new day and each new challenge it presents. I AM – will be with you to carry out the call God has given you. To go where he calls you to go. To serve the people he calls you to serve. All with confidence.

I AM! The bible uses that name, 6,823 times it uses that name, to remind us that we totally depend on him. In the first chapter of the Bible, when it speaks of God’s creating, the name God is made – the God who is God of God’s. Who speaks, and God creates light. Who, orders and God creates all things. But when the first chapter of the Bible describes the creation of man, how God formed him out of the dust of the ground, it says this, “The LORD breathed into him the breath of life.” Notice the significance of this name – the LORD, the great I AM. It is the name that says God isn’t just the God far above the heavens, but the LORD, who comes close to his people.

## 2. The faithful God who speaks love to our hearts

God emphasized that closeness to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD (and note how the name is spelled – in all capital letters to set apart that name, “I AM”), the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob – has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.”

I AM, is the faithful God who speaks love to our hearts. He remembered his promise to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob – promises to make their family great, promises to lead them to a land of milk and honey, promises to send a Savior through their family. This name says he has been faithful to that promise and now has come to keep that promise.

I AM, is the faithful God who heard the cries of his people in slavery, and now he has come to speak love to their hearts. That he will keep his promise.

I AM is the name of the God who speaks love to your hearts. For he says to you and to me, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” That same Savior says to you,

- > I am the light of the world. Whoever believes in me will never walk in darkness.
- > Jesus says, I am the bread. Know me and you will be satisfied.
- > He says, I am the good shepherd who lays his life down for his sheep to win forgiveness and life for each of us.
- > He says, I am the vine and you are the branches. Remain in him and you WILL bear much

fruit.

- And how about this for confidence, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”
- Truly he is right when he says, “I AM the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me.”

I AM – it was a name so special that the Hebrew people didn't even pronounce it when they came across the word in their writings. They wrote, YHWH but they read Adonai, another name for God. Some think the name should be pronounced, Jehovah, but they don't really know. Some think it should be Yahweh, but even that isn't right. God's people in the Old Testament wanted to keep the 2<sup>nd</sup> commandment and never take that name in vain. They wanted to remember the name of the Living God who spoke through fire, the name of the faithful God who speaks love to hearts.

But we know that name and we can say it loudly and boldly, for there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved. His name is Jesus. And the Bible says (Prov.18:10), “The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.”

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