

I AM WHO I AM

John Piper

....And then Moses brings us to one of the most important things God ever said. This is our text, [Exodus 3:13–15](#).

Then Moses said to God, *“If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”*¹⁴ *God said to Moses, “I Am Who I Am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I Am has sent me to you.’”*¹⁵ *God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The Lord [Hebrew: “Yahweh”], 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 [Yahweh], and thus I Am to be remembered throughout all generations.”*

Three Things God Says About Himself

You ask me my name, God says, I will tell you three things. First (verse 14) "God said to Moses, 'I Am Who I Am.'" He did not say that was his name. He said, in effect: Before you worry about my name, where I line up among the many God's of Egypt or Babylon or Philistia, and before you wonder about conjuring me with my name, and even before you wonder if I Am the God of Abraham, be stunned by this: "I Am Who I Am." I absolutely am. Before you get my name, get my being. That I Am Who I Am—that I absolutely am— is first, foundational, and of infinite importance.

Second (verse 14b) "And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel, 'I Am has sent me to you.''" Here he has not yet given Moses his name. He is building a bridge between his being and his name. Here he simply puts the statement of his being in the place of his name. Say, "I Am has sent me to you." The one who is—who absolutely is—sent me to you.

Third (verse 15) "God also said to Moses, 'Say this to the people of Israel, 'The Lord [Hebrew: "Yahweh"], 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 [Yahweh]. Finally he gives us his name. It's almost always translated Lord (all caps) in the English Bible. But the Hebrew would be pronounced something like "Yahweh," and is built on the word for "I Am." So every time we hear the word Yahweh (or the short form Yah, which you hear every time you sing "hallelujah", "praise Yahweh"), or every time you see Lord in the English Bible you should think: this is a proper name (like Peter or James or John) built out of the word for "I Am" and reminding us each time that God absolutely is.

Ten Things It Means for God to Be Who He Is

1. God's absolute being means he never had a beginning. This staggers the mind. Every child asks, "Who made God?" And every wise parent says, "Nobody made God. God simply is. And always was. No beginning."

2. God's absolute being means God will never end. If he did not come into being he cannot go out of being, because he is being. He is what is. There is no place to go outside of being. There is only he. Before he creates, that's all that is: God.

3. God's absolute being means God is absolute reality. There is no reality before him. There is no reality outside of him unless he wills it and makes it. He is not one of many realities before he creates. He is simply there as absolute reality. He is all that was eternally. No space, no universe, no emptiness. Only God. Absolutely there. Absolutely all.

4. God's absolute being means that God is utterly independent. He depends on nothing to bring him into being or support him or counsel him or make him what he is. That is what the word "absolute" being means.

5. God's absolute being means rather that everything that is not God depends totally on God. All that is not God is secondary, and dependent. The entire universe is utterly secondary. Not primary. It came into being by God and stays in being moment by moment on God's decision to keep it in being.

6. God's absolute being means all the universe is by comparison to God as nothing. Contingent, dependent reality is to absolute, independent reality as a shadow to substance. As an echo to a thunderclap. As a bubble to the ocean. All that we see, all that we are amazed by in the world and in the galaxies, is, compared to God, as nothing. "All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as

less than nothing and emptiness" (Isaiah 40:17).

7. God's absolute being means that God is constant. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He cannot be improved. He is not becoming anything. He is who he is. There is no development in God. No progress. Absolute perfection cannot be improved.

8. God's absolute being means that he is the absolute standard of truth and goodness and beauty. There is no law-book to which he looks to know what is right. No almanac to establish facts. No guild to determine what is excellent or beautiful. He himself is the standard of what is right, what is true, what is beautiful.

9. God's absolute being means God does whatever he pleases and it is always right and always beautiful and always in accord with truth. There are no constraints on him from outside him that could hinder him in doing anything he pleases. All reality that is outside of him he created and designed and governs as the absolute reality. So he is utterly free from any constraints that don't originate from the counsel of his own will.

10. God's absolute being means that he is the most important and most valuable reality and the most important and most valuable person in the universe. He is more worthy of interest and attention and admiration and enjoyment than all other realities, including the entire universe.