

Th131 God's Plan

Lesson Th131-1 God Is Eternal

Who is God? What is He? Why did God create the universe, and perhaps just as important, why did God create us? This God is all powerful. This God knows everything. This God is everywhere at the same time. This God has no beginning and no end. He existed before the universe was created and will exist after it ends.

In this lesson we will learn one of the names of God and discover a very important concept of God's existence. We will learn that God is eternal.

So, who is this God, and what is His name? In the book of Exodus we read an amazing story about a man named Moses and his meeting with God. (Ex 2-3)

Moses was born over 3,000 years ago in the land of Egypt. Although born in Egypt, he was not an Egyptian, but rather was born to a Hebrew slave. He was a descendant of a man named Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob, whose father was Isaac, and whose grandfather was Abraham. Jacob and his sons had left the land of Israel and had moved their families to Egypt to escape a severe famine. For 400 years his descendants lived in Egypt. But over time they had been enslaved by the Egyptian kings who were called Pharaohs. Living as slaves was painful and the Hebrews cried out to God for deliverance.

And God heard their prayers. He would answer them through a man named Moses.

Now Moses lived a very unusual life. He was born during a time when all Hebrew male babies were to be killed at birth. But his mother had refused to kill him. Instead she placed him in a waterproof basket and hid him in the plants along the edge of the river. The king of Egypt's daughter found Moses in the basket. She decided to adopt him and raise him as her own son. Moses grew up with the best education and all the benefits of royalty. But he also grew up knowing that he was a Hebrew and a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

At the age of 40 Moses would suddenly go from the Palaces of Egypt to the dry wilderness of the land of Midian. It all began when Moses saw an Egyptian task master beating a Hebrew slave. Moses became enraged at the cruelty of the Egyptian. He stopped the Egyptian from beating the Hebrew and in his anger killed the Egyptian. Burying the dead Egyptian did not hide his crime. Others had seen what he had done. Because Moses was afraid, he fled the land of Egypt and went to the desert land of Midian. There he lived among the nomads who had large flocks of sheep. Moses married the daughter of Jethro, a priest of Midian. For the next 40 years Moses lived in a tent as a nomad and a shepherd. Now at the age of 80, most men would be content with their wife and children, but Moses was about to have an encounter with God that would change everything.

One day Moses was tending the sheep of Jethro, his father-in-law, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness. He came to a mountain named Horeb which was called the mountain of God. Suddenly Moses saw something that was beyond his understanding. There

was a bush that was burning with fire, and yet the bush did not burn up! Moses thought to himself, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.” As Moses approached the bush the voice of God called out to him from within the bush.

“Moses! Moses!” God called.

Moses said, “Here I am.”

“Do not come any closer,” God ordered. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”

Can you imagine how surprised Moses was? What would you have done? Would you have stayed, or would you have run in fear? Moses took off his sandals as the voice of God spoke from within the burning bush: “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

Can you imagine the fear and confusion that Moses was experiencing? But in spite of his fear at standing before God, he had perhaps an even greater fear. How could he do what was being asked of him? Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

But God knows everything. Even the heart and mind of every person. So God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.”

But Moses was afraid of what the Israelites would say to him. He said to God, “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?”

It is now that we come to perhaps the single most important part of this story for God is about to reveal to Moses His name. 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.’ Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, 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 you shall call me from generation to generation.”

Now Moses would indeed go to Egypt and deliver the message from God to free the Israelites from their bondage. But that is another story for another time.

Let's take a few minutes and ponder this amazing revelation of God's name. God said His name is, "I am." This is a remarkable statement. It is said that God is unknowable; that His ways are not our ways and that His thoughts are not our thoughts. God is beyond our comprehension. Yet he chose for himself a name that would reveal something unique about His being. He chose for a name a verb or action word that we use to describe that something exists. Now in most languages verbs have what we call tenses. The past tense would be, "I was." The present tense would be, "I am." And the future tense is, "I will be." Now the Hebrew language does not have these three tenses. It only has two. One is used for completed actions that are short and the other for incomplete actions that are long, or on-going. God chose as His name the verb that was the long action verb. This is like saying God's name is, "I am continuously being." This is perhaps a better understanding of God. He exists continuously or eternally. We say that God is eternal. This means that He has no beginning, day of creation, or birth, but that He has always existed. It also means that He will never end, or die, or cease to exist.

In the Book of Revelation we read that there are twenty-four elders that sit around God's throne. They declare that God "was, and is, and is to come." God is eternal. The very name that He chose for himself declares this.

Being eternal is different than being immortal. Immortality means that something does not die. Angels are immortal. They do not die. But they had a beginning. They are created beings. But God is eternal. He has no beginning. He has always existed. This is a very important concept and key to understanding who God is.

This lesson is **important** because it teaches us that God revealed a key part of his nature through His new name, revealed to Moses at the burning bush. His name is, "I am who I am."

The **main truth** of this lesson is that one of the characteristics of God is that He is eternal. This means that God has no beginning or end.

The **review** questions for this lesson are:

1. In our lesson today we learned one of God's names. What was the name that God gave himself when talking to Moses from the burning bush? [Pause 5 seconds]
 - A. If you said that God told Moses that His name was, "I am who I am," then you are correct.
2. From this name we have learned something very important about the nature of God. What is this important concept? [Pause 5 seconds]
 - A. If you said that God's name tells us that He is eternal, you have answered correctly.
3. What does it mean to be eternal? [Pause 5 seconds]
 - A. If you said, "It means that God has no beginning and no end," you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to replay it two or three times until you can repeat the story accurately and understand the correct meaning of God's name, "I am who I am." Then, find someone and tell them the story and teach them what you have learned about God's name and the concept of God being eternal.