

# Encountering the Eternal

Exodus 3:1-15

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## INTRODUCTION:

Tonight, we are going to be considering what I believe is a key foundational text to our faith.

My reasoning for saying this is because in this incredible text of Exodus 3, we see one of the oldest and clearest instances of the eternal God revealing Himself in a direct way.

And in this manifestation of the Lord to Moses, we learn about the nature of the eternal and supreme being that we refer to as God.

Tonight, Lord willing, we will learn many things, but chiefly we will see the nature and some of the attributes of God on full display.

If you've never done a deep dive into the attributes of God, I challenge you to do so. This is something that your faith will benefit from in an indescribable way! We should seek to understand the nature and attributes of the God that we get to know and serve.

Certainly, we see the nature and attributes of God as we consider the totality of the Scriptures. It is by the Scriptures that you and I can even know who He is and what He's like.

If we want to think rightly about God, we must think biblically about God. In fact, the ONLY way to think rightly about God is to think biblically about God! If you develop ideas about God that are not founded in His Word, you've made a false god/idol.

With that being said, there's are some extremely helpful Christian books out there that effectively compile the Scriptures so that you and I can learn about what it means when God says He is holy, or when He says He is omnipotent, and so on and so forth.

- The Knowledge of the Holy – A.W. Tozer
- Knowing God – J.I. Packer
- The Attributes of God – A.W. Tozer
- The Attributes of God – A.W. Pink

**Illustration:** I suppose if your first and middle initials are A and W, you're halfway to being an awesome biblical commentator; or halfway to making a good root beer

Tonight, we will be diving into Moses' encounter with the eternal God and learn about what God reveals to Moses about His nature. Though we'll talk much of Moses, the focus of this text is the Lord.

While this was no doubt an awesome moment for Moses to experience, it can and should be equally as awesome for us if we see it for what it is.

## 1. AN AWESOME APPEARING (vs 1-6)

*<sup>1</sup> Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush.*

*So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. <sup>3</sup> Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn."*

*<sup>4</sup> So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!"  
And he said, "Here I am."*

*<sup>5</sup> Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." <sup>6</sup> Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.*

We pick it up tonight in the third chapter of Exodus, but there is much that has taken place leading up to this point.

Here in chapter 3, we find the infamous man of God, Moses, in the land of Midian. But what is Moses doing in Midian?

Moses has fled to Midian out of fear for his own life. Prior to this season of Moses' life in Midian, he dwelt in Egypt. He was raised in the most powerful household in all of the land, the household of Pharaoh.

At some point, Moses came to understand that he was a Hebrew, just like his brethren that were enduring brutal slavery and persecution from the Egyptian taskmasters.

It comes to pass that one day, while Moses is observing the burdens of his brothers, that he sees a taskmaster abusing a Hebrew slave. Moses checks to see if the coast is clear, then proceeds to kill the taskmaster and buries him in the sand.

All seemed fine until the next day when Moses attempts to break up an altercation between two Hebrews. One of the men calls Moses out in this moment by saying, “who made you a prince and judge over us? Do you intend to kill me like you killed the Egyptian yesterday?”.

Upon hearing this, Moses is filled with fear because what he did was clearly known by others. Word then reaches the king of Egypt, and he seeks to kill Moses.

And so, Moses flees for his life and ends up in Midian. Moses is 40 years old upon his arrival in the land of Midian and ends up dwelling there until he is 80 when the Lord visits him.

So, 80-year-old Moses is minding his own business in Midian. He’s now a married man with children. He’s got a job of shepherding his father-in-law’s flock. But this secluded life was not God’s plan for this man. God had much bigger things in mind.

While Moses is out with Jethro’s flock, the Angel of the Lord appears to him. We must ask, though angels are certainly far from ordinary creatures, was this just an ordinary angel? Was this like a higher tiered angel like an archangel? NO & NO.

This was not simply AN angel of the Lord; this was THE Angel of the Lord. Make no mistake, this is the Lord God Himself appearing to Moses.

This is what is commonly referred to as a theophany. A theophany is a manifestation of God Himself in a way that is tangible to human senses. And that is exactly what is happening here at the burning bush.

This was a God-orchestrated and God-ordained moment that Moses was experiencing. Moses didn’t conjure up this moment, the Lord initiated it all.

**Application:** There is something to be said here. When God reveals Himself, He is the one who initiates it and determines the means. The Gospel itself is no different. The manifestation of God to this world in the form of a human, the God-man Christ Jesus, was initiated by the will of God out of His love for humanity!

How did God choose to reveal Himself to Moses in this moment? By the means of a bush that was engulfed in flames yet was not being consumed.

This miraculous and awesome sight causes Moses to take note go check it out. Upon drawing near, the Lord calls out to him by name.

**Application:** I believe there is significance to the fact that the Lord calls to Moses by name. This speaks to God’s intimate and acquainted knowledge of us. Not only does He know all the stars and call them by name, He knows our name.

**Illustration:** He is not some disconnected CEO type of God that gives orders to us like we're grunts but has no idea who we are. The exact opposite is true.

He calls to us as the very One who made us and gave us our name.

### **Jeremiah 1:5**

<sup>5</sup> "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you;  
Before you were born I sanctified you;  
I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

God's intimate knowledge of Jeremiah predated Jeremiah's existence in the womb! That's hard to wrap our heads around and so it should be!

**Application:** His knowledge of us precedes His using of us. We are His sons and daughters THEN His servants.

Nonetheless, Moses hears His named called out by this enflamed bush and so he's got nothing else to say but "here I am".

Now, as we'll see later, this wasn't necessarily Moses expressing willingness to go and do what the Lord was calling him to do. This isn't a "here I am" like Isaiah's was in Isaiah 6:8.

God responds to Moses and gives him a warning and command. He tells the shepherd that was just out for a walk with the sheep to not come any closer and to remove his sandals. The reason why was because the ground upon which Moses stood in this moment was HOLY (sacred).

Was this ground holy because it was special dirt or something like that?

Illustration: Was there an endangered species that the CA environmentalist was trying to protect?

Of course not. This was ordinary dirt.

**Illustration:** The Law of the conservation of mass tells us that matter cannot be created nor destroyed. For this reason, me and one of the jr high students have developed a business plan to start selling jars of dirt and ocean water but to advertise it as the same dirt and water that was around when Adam and Eve walked the earth.

The ground was ordinary ground that had become extraordinary because of the Lord Himself being there! It was God's holy presence that made the ground holy.

### **Joshua 5:13–15**

<sup>13</sup> And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?"

<sup>14</sup> So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come."

And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, “What does my Lord say to His servant?”

<sup>15</sup> Then the Commander of the Lord’s army said to Joshua, “Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand *is* holy.” And Joshua did so.

And so, at this point, the Lord makes it clear to Moses who is speaking to him. Moses was speaking to none other than the God of his fathers: the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

When Moses realizes that he is speaking to the eternal God, he rightly hides his face out of fear. But the Lord still had much more to say to Moses...

## 2. THE ATTENTIVE ALMIGHTY (vs 7-9)

*<sup>7</sup> And the Lord said: “I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. <sup>8</sup> So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. <sup>9</sup> Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.*

Here is where we see the Lord make Moses aware of how HE is aware of the oppression and suffering of His people.

“**oppression**” – affliction, misery, great suffering and distress

The Lord uses three key words to describe His intimate awareness and attentiveness to the suffering of His people:

- “I have surely SEEN the oppression of My people”
- “...have heard their cry”
- “I know their sorrows”

Though His people had been going through this season of brutal enslavement for many years, the Lord wanted Moses to know that He was not at all distant and far removed from His people and their needs.

We dare not think that the Lord is inattentive to our problems...

**Isaiah 40:27–31**

<sup>27</sup> Why do you say, O Jacob,  
And speak, O Israel:  
“My way is hidden from the Lord,  
And my just claim is passed over by my God”?

<sup>28</sup> Have you not known?  
Have you not heard?  
The everlasting God, the Lord,  
The Creator of the ends of the earth,  
Neither faints nor is weary.  
His understanding is unsearchable.

<sup>29</sup> He gives power to the weak,  
And to *those who have* no might He increases strength.

<sup>30</sup> Even the youths shall faint and be weary,  
And the young men shall utterly fall,

<sup>31</sup> But those who wait on the Lord  
Shall renew *their* strength;  
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
They shall run and not be weary,  
They shall walk and not faint.

**Application:** Still today, He is a God that is not disengaged from our lives to where we suffer without Him seeing us, hearing us, and knowing the sorrows we face. We call out to a God that is aware, attentive, and knows suffering far more than we can even comprehend.

The Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 is described as...

**Isaiah 53:3a**

<sup>3</sup> He is despised and rejected by men,  
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

Our Lord even wept at the tomb of Lazarus, despite knowing that He'd raise him back to life. He is acquainted with grief more than we know!

And so, when we call upon the Lord in times of distress, we are calling to the Almighty who is ATTENTIVE to His beloved!

**Psalms 46:1**

<sup>1</sup> God *is* our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.

“**very present**” – abundantly available, extremely close in proximity

**Psalm 145:18–19**

<sup>18</sup> The Lord *is* near to all who call upon Him,  
To all who call upon Him in truth.  
<sup>19</sup> He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him;  
He also will hear their cry and save them.

Now there are some verses to desperately cling to in seasons of difficulty!

The cries of His people had reached the attentive ears of Almighty God.

**Exodus 2:23–25**

<sup>23</sup> Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. <sup>24</sup> So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. <sup>25</sup> And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged *them*.

Praise the Lord that He is a covenant-keeping God! He is faithful to do what He has said He is going to do. Because He has this perfect track record of faithfulness, He can be trusted!

**Application:** It is truly my prayer that those of you who are in need of it would find an abundance of comfort in the fact that your God is aware and attentive to what you're facing.

He hears your cry. He sees your struggle. He is with you in it. So, take heart in His presence with you while you're in the fiery furnace of life's trials. (Fourth Man in the fire)

God had not abandoned His people in their hardship. Rather, He was with them and was at work to bring about a grand plan that no mind but His could conceive. And this plan would be for His glory and His people's good.

**2 Corinthians 4:17**

<sup>17</sup> For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory,

**Romans 8:28**

<sup>28</sup> And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

**Application:** The three phases of Romans 8:28 (before the trial, in the trial, after the trial)

But God was not just attentive and aware, He was on the move. The Lord tells Moses in verse 8 that He was coming down to deliver them from their bondage that they couldn't deliver themselves from and to bring them into an abundantly blessed land.

ARE YOU THINKING WHAT I'M THINKING? IS THIS NOT SUCH A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE OF THE GOSPEL?!

Think about it! The Lord Himself was going to intervene. When it came to our sin-situation that we got ourselves in, GOD HIMSELF in the Person of Christ came down to fix it!

“You want a job done right, do it yourself” – God (probably/maybe)

In all seriousness, God saw us in the pit of our sin that we ourselves dug and He didn't leave us there! He could have and would have been just in doing so, BUT HE DIDN'T! Instead, He heard our cry and responded with MERCIFUL DELIVERANCE!

#### **Ephesians 2:4–7**

<sup>4</sup> But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

When we were in that dead pit of sin, He reached down in mercy through Christ, He raised us up out of it, and He brought us into His heavenly kingdom/family!

And we weren't deserving of any of this one bit; but the Gospel isn't about us getting what we deserve, it's about the grace, mercy, and love of God in Christ.

#### **Romans 5:6–8**

<sup>6</sup> For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

While we were at our worst is when Christ died for us. WHAT A GOSPEL!

### **3. A DIVINE DISPATCHING (vs 10-12)**

<sup>10</sup> *Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”*

<sup>11</sup> *But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”*

<sup>12</sup> *So He said, “I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”*

I can almost imagine Moses up until this point nodding his head in agreement with God's plan to deliver His people out of Egypt, because, up until now, the Lord hasn't mentioned Moses being a direct part of the plan. Here's where that changes.

The Lord essentially tells him, "Let's go Mo. I'm sending you to Pharaoh to deliver my people!". You can almost imagine Moses being like "Excuse me God? I don't think I heard you right. I thought you said YOU were going to deliver your people, not me!".

Moses' true response to the Lord is actually a question, and it seems like a pretty reasonable one, if you ask me! His question is simply, "who am I that I should do this?".

**Application:** I'm not sure about you, but I can totally relate to Moses here. I have asked this question to the Lord many times in the past and will probably ask Him it many more times in the future (I may have even asked Him it before giving you all tonight's sermon).

I can tend to feel so unworthy to be used by God (which is true, because we're all unworthy). I can tend to feel extremely inadequate to be used by God (this happens when I'm in the flesh and more focused on me than on what my God is capable of).

**Application:** There is a humility in asking this question of "who am I that I should \_\_\_\_\_", but there's also a danger in it if you dig your feet into the sand and refuse to move forward when God calls you to.

In response to Moses' question, the Lord reassures him that He'd be with him every step of the way. This truly was all the reassurance that Moses needed in this moment, and it's all the reassurance we need too.

#### **Matthew 28:18–20**

<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

Now, we won't get into them in detail, but Moses would go on to hear more of God's great plan and would continue to give excuses as to why he couldn't do it, and why God should find somebody else.

**Application:** Moses truly had a bad case of analysis paralysis. It is possible to so over-analyze a situation to where you actually just stay stuck and never take a step of faith when that's exactly what God wants you to do. I would argue that you'll never achieve great things for the kingdom if you live this way.

Moses was making the mistake of looking too much at himself and his insufficiencies when he should have been trusting in the Lord who makes the insufficient sufficient!

### 2 Corinthians 3:5-6

<sup>5</sup> Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, <sup>6</sup> who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

“God does not call the equipped, He equips the called.”

All Moses needed was the Lord. It was God’s business to equip him. It was Moses’ business to trust and take God at His Word that He’d be with him through it all.

## 4. A SELF-EXISTENT SAVIOR (vs 13-15)

<sup>13</sup> *Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?”*

<sup>14</sup> *And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ”* <sup>15</sup> *Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The Lord 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, and this is My memorial to all generations.’ ”*

We’ve already said much about the nature and attributes of our God leading up to this final point. We’ve mentioned that He’s a God who reveals Himself, that He’s holy, that He’s faithful to keep His Word/covenants, that He’s an aware and attentive God, and that He’s a present God.

Here’s where we one more key attribute of His on display as it is revealed in His proper name being revealed to Moses.

Contrary to what some might think, “God” is not His name but rather His title.

“God” = “**Elohim**” – the supernatural being/divine agent that originated and rules over the universe

In his hesitation to do what the Lord was calling Him to do, Moses poses a hypothetical, yet somewhat likely, situation to the Lord and asks what he should say if it happens. The hypothetical situation: “what if when I come to your people, they ask me your name?”.

The Lord doesn't rebuke Moses for this but rather simply gives him His personal proper name. The Lord tells Moses that His name is "I AM WHO I AM".

"I AM WHO I AM" → "YHWH"

This is what's known as the tetragrammaton (four letters that form the proper name of God).

You and I might think it to be a bit of an odd name because it doesn't really sound like a name to us, but it is nonetheless the name of our God. His name is YHWH (Yahweh).

This was the name that Moses was to tell the people when they asked for God's name. Verse 15 tells us that this has been His name forever and will be His name forever.

But the proper name of God reveals some key things to us about His nature. From His name alone, we can understand that He is self-existent, self-sufficient, and eternal.

What do we mean by these things? Well, firstly God has no origin/beginning. He always has been and always will be. He is the Creator of all things but is Himself uncreated because He's always been.

There's never been a moment where God didn't exist and never will be a moment that He doesn't exist.

**Illustration:** He has existed in infinity that direction from Genesis 1:1 and will exist in infinity that direction from Revelation 22:21!

He is independent from the boundaries of time: He dwells outside of these limits, unlike us and everything we know. He exists within Himself.

"A more positive assertion of selfhood could not be imagined than those words of God to Moses: I AM THAT I AM. Everything God is, everything that is God, is set forth in that unqualified declaration of independent being." – **A.W. Tozer**

As much as the question "who created God?" feels natural for us to ask, it is improper to ask because of the fact that God is self-existent, uncreated, and eternal.

"Children sometimes ask, 'Who made God?' The clearest answer is that **God never needed to be made, because he was always there**. He exists in a different way from us: we, his creatures, exist in a dependent, derived, finite, fragile way, but **our Maker exists in an eternal, self-sustaining, necessary way** - necessary, that is, in the sense that God does not have it in him to go out of existence, just as we do not have it in us to live forever. We necessarily age and die, because it is our present nature to do that; God necessarily continues forever unchanged, because it is his eternal nature to do that. This is one of many contrasts between creature and Creator." – **J.I. Packer**

He is the unmoved mover. He is the uncaused cause.

And what we must know about His self-existent and eternal nature is that it applies to all 3 Persons of the trinity. It doesn't only apply to the Father, but to the Son and the Spirit also.

Contrary to what certain cults may say, Jesus was not created by the Father. He dwelt in perfect unity with the Father and Spirit prior to Genesis 1:1.

### **John 1:1–3**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.

<sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

### **Revelation 1:8**

<sup>8</sup> "I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

That is a clear statement that Jesus makes of Himself regarding His eternal nature!

### **John 8:52–59**

<sup>52</sup> Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.' <sup>53</sup> Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?"

<sup>54</sup> Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. <sup>55</sup> Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. <sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad."

<sup>57</sup> Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?"

<sup>58</sup> Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

<sup>59</sup> Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

## **CONCLUSION:**

What blows my mind when I consider these things about the nature of God is that, as awesome as He is, as powerful as He is, as holy as He is, as self-sufficient as He is, He chose to create me.

And not only did He choose to create me, He knows in such a personal and intimate way that I can't fully wrap my mind around (and I'm glad I can't).

But not only does He know me, He sent His Son to save me so that I could dwell in eternal joy with Him. He didn't need me and He doesn't need me, but He loves me and wants me.

And friend, maybe your hear tonight or watching, and you don't know this God who knows you perfectly. It is His will that you know Him personally. As great, powerful, eternal, and self-sufficient as He is, He invites you to know Him in the closest of ways.

Knowing God like this starts by having your sin forgiven by Christ. From there, the God of all creation beckons us to experience this intimate relationship with Him, which will only get better when we are in heaven with Him.

So, what are you waiting for? You can encounter the Eternal tonight if you put your faith in Jesus as the Son of God.

**PRAY**