

Exodus 3:1-15  
Who Are You? The Riddle of God's Name  
WRCoB 9.29.19

According to Wikipedia: *A riddle is a statement or question or phrase having a double or veiled meaning, put forth as a puzzle to be solved.*

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Let's start this morning with a few riddles

1.

I have one eye but cannot see  
And I always work with something in it.  
Who am I? (needle)

2.

I'm light as a feather  
Yet the strongest man cannot hold me  
For more than 5 minutes.  
Who am I? (breath)

3.

I can run but never walk.  
I have a mouth but never talk.  
I have a bed but never sleep.  
Who am I? (a river)

3.

I never was but always will be  
No one ever sees me but everyone knows I exist.  
I give people the motivation to better themselves daily.  
Who am I? (tomorrow)

Let me share one more  
This one from the Book of Proverbs:

4.

**Proverbs 30:4 (NRSV)**

**4 Who has ascended to heaven and come down?  
Who has gathered the wind in the hollow of the hand?  
Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment?  
Who has established all the ends of the earth?  
What is the person's name?  
And what is the name of the person's child?  
Surely you know! (God and Christ Jesus)**

Which leads me to believe that the greatest of riddles  
Is whether God truly exists  
Or is just a fabrication of our imagination.

If a riddle is a question cloaked in meaning  
Then the greatest questions in life are simple.

Who am I?  
Why do I exist?

Is there a God?  
What is the meaning of life?

The greatest questions in life are simple.

However simple they may be  
They are not easy to answer!

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For those of us who are Christian  
The answers to life's greatest questions  
Are found in the Bible.

From the very beginning in Genesis  
To the very end pages of Revelation  
The Bible tells us the story of God.

It records the beginnings of creation  
The birth of first man and woman

And the age-long redemptive work of God  
Culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

We believe the Bible records  
All we need for faith and practice.

And yet . . .

Is there proof that what the Bible declares to be true, is true?

Can the Bible prove the existence of God?

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And really, God doesn't help matters either!

God's nature is elusive and mysterious  
His ways are way beyond our ways.

And yet . . .

There are signs, hints, clues, and yes, even riddles  
That point to the existence of God!

Enough so, that we choose to believe in God  
Despite the ambiguity.

We believe God not only exists but seeks to be known!

And we believe there are times in life  
That God calls out specific people to specific tasks.

Our Scripture Lesson is certainly a case in point.

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The story is a familiar one.

Moses, a Hebrew, born in Egypt, into slavery  
Is saved from Egyptian genocide  
The killing of male babies  
And raised in the Pharaoh's palace.

As a grown man  
He witnesses a slave driver's abusive behavior  
Toward a fellow Hebrew slave.

And in a moment of rage  
He murders the Egyptian slave boss  
And flees for his life into the wilds of Midian.

Moses marries a Midian priest's daughter, Zipporah  
And works as a shepherd for his in-law's flocks.

While caring for the sheep  
Moses witnesses what appears to be a burning bush.

But as he approaches he realizes the fire  
Isn't consuming the bush.

From within the bush, God speaks to Moses!

**5.**

**Exodus 3:5 (CEV) "Don't come any closer. Take off your sandals—the ground where you are standing is holy.**

Not only removing his shoes  
Moses hides his face, afraid to look.

God informs Moses he has heard the cries of his people!  
He has witnessed their affliction  
He knows their sufferings!

God declares that he will deliver them  
Out of captivity and into the Promised Land!

And Moses will lead them.

And like any typical reluctant prophet, Moses asks.  
“Me?” “Who am I?”

It is not surprising Moses asked the question  
For two reasons:

The first being . . .

Really, who was Moses?

He was a murderer and a fugitive  
A lowly shepherd seeking to stay out of trouble?

Who was he to confront the pharaoh and his army?

The second reason for the question is theological.

Why would God need anyone to do his work?!?!?

If it is any comfort, God assures Moses  
God will be with him.

Not the assurance Moses was looking for.

**6.**

**Exodus 3:13 (NLT) But Moses protested, “If I go to the people of Israel and tell them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ they will ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what should I tell them?”**

The question Moses poses to God  
Is the question above all questions.

The greatest question in life, “God, who are you?”

And God's reply?

“*Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh*,”

“I am who I am”

Or “I am that I am”

Or “I will be who I will be.”

That's the best the English language can do!

It's a riddle, really

If riddle means having a double or veiled meaning

Put forth as a puzzle to be solved.

The name doesn't tell us much about this God, does it?

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Like for instance, if I started a new job down at the factory

And I was running into all kinds of new people.

I'd say to someone

“Hey, I'm Dave. I'm the new fork-lift operator.

What's your name?”

And they would answer

“Glad to meet you. I'm Helen, the shipping clerk.”

Right?

But what would it be like if this happened.

“Hi, I'm the new guy, Dave. Who are you?”

“I am who I am.”

Say whaaaat?

You’d either think he was a lunatic  
OR, that HE was the owner of the factory.

Either way, you’d better tread softly  
And avoid him altogether if possible.

And Moses tried to do just that.

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To me, I AM WHO I AM is not so much a name  
As it is a proclamation of authority.

I AM THAT I AM suggests that one stands  
In the presence of someone powerful  
Someone holy and mysterious  
And beyond our understanding.

Hence the command to remove one’s sandals.

Moses knew he stood in the presence of Creator God.

Knew God was commanding him  
To lead his people out of captivity.

And that’s about all Moses understood.

Everything else was a step of faith.

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Theology is the study of God.

And throughout the centuries

Thinkers have sought to solve the riddle of God's name.

In seeking to understand God and his ways

Theologians have assigned attributes to God.

There are as many as twenty-seven according to Wikipedia

And as many as seven

According to a Brethren study of doctrine.

Note how the attributes

In and of themselves are something of a riddle.

### 7-13

- God is Omnipresent—God is everywhere present (Psalm 139)
- God is Omniscient—God knows all (Psalm 147:5; Job 28:24)
- God is Omnipotent—God's power knows no limitations (Psalm 33:6-9; Psalm 107:21-43)
- God is Transcendent—God is above and separate from creation (Job 42:2; Isaiah 40:22).
- God is Immutable—God does not change (Ex. 3:14; James 1:17).
- God is Immanent—God is near us and within us (Mt. 28:20; Ephesians 4:6; Isaiah 57:15)
- God is Eternal—God is without beginning and ending (Rev. 1:8; Dt. 33:27)

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The greatest questions in life are simple.

Who am I?

Why do I exist?

What is the meaning of life?

Is there life beyond death?

Is there a God?

What is God like?

What is God's purpose for creation?

Does God actually care?

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Since God is beyond our understanding

God has given us a great gift.

A gift to conceptualize the attributes and the character

Of the great YHWH.

God has done this through Jesus.

The Book of Hebrews says it best:

14.

**Hebrews 1:1-4 (NRSV) Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. <sup>3</sup> He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.**

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If you are searching for answers to life's great questions

Look to Jesus

It is in Christ that you find God.

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One last riddle:

**15**

I am greater than God, more evil than the devil,

The poor have me, the rich don't,

And if you eat me, you'll die.

What am I? (nothing).